





P. C. KELLY  
ROSLAND





STUDIES IN IRISH HISTORY  
AND BIOGRAPHY



STUDIES IN IRISH  
HISTORY AND  
BIOGRAPHY, MAINLY  
OF THE EIGHTEENTH  
CENTURY

BY

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## PREFACE

THE Essays collected in this volume, though in form separate and independent of each other, will be found to deal in the main with the same period of Irish history, and to possess sufficient historical sequence to give to the book as a whole a certain unity. If they should be held to justify republication it must, however, be chiefly in virtue of the fact that in every instance they represent a careful investigation at first hand of the available authorities, and a serious endeavour, first to fully apprehend the facts of the case, and next to present a faithful impression of the results of such research.

Lord Rosebery has felicitously observed that 'the Irish question has never passed into history because it has never passed out of politics;' and it results from this peculiarity that writers upon Irish history, however successfully they may endeavour to be impartial, are almost certain to be criticised from the point of view of Irish politics. It is therefore almost idle to hope to deal with such questions as are discussed in these Essays with absolute colourlessness, or to defy criticism from either or both sides of current controversies. Yet, though it be impossible in the twilight of history to discern distinctly all the features of the dim figures whom we strain our eyes to identify, and while it is in vain that we seek to attain to the whole truth about the past, it is hoped

that at any rate the outlines of the figures sketched here, however incompletely caught, have been faithfully reproduced ; that the aspects of history which are dwelt upon have been presented truthfully ; and that at any rate the book does not offend against the one broad moral of Irish history—that the study of the past of Ireland is a signal lesson in charity to all Irishmen.

The writer does not of course flatter himself that he has in any instance exhausted his subject, though he trusts that the biographical papers, especially those on the Earl-Bishop of Derry and Lord Clare, add something to historical knowledge ; still less does he pretend to deal with the whole of the questions involved in his topics. In general it is with the by-currents rather than with the main stream of Irish history that the book is concerned, and the characters discussed belong more often than not to the unpopular side of the controversies with which they were connected. But though the main object of the Essays has been either to revive the recollection of great or interesting figures whose importance appears to have been too much lost sight of, or to recall certain aspects of history which seem to have been too little regarded, it is certainly not intended thereby to disparage the fame of those acknowledged heroes of modern Irish history whose memory is most warmly cherished by the mass of their countrymen. It is to be lamented that, for the reason already mentioned, a common pride in what is memorable in her history, irrespective of the occasion, is but too rare in Ireland, and that a general readiness to forget what is least admirable on either side is too seldom displayed. The martial valour of Irishmen is a quality whose glory we shall all agree is independent of the merits of the cause in which it is displayed, and our homage to moral grandeur,

intellectual power, or great achievement need not be limited by our predilections or prejudices. To insist on the importance of Plunket's share in the struggle for Catholic Emancipation is not to rob O'Connell of the aureole of his genius, nor is the majestic figure of Grattan dwarfed by dwelling on the great qualities of the Earl of Clare.

Most of the Essays have been published in whole or in part within the last few years in Reviews or Magazines; but they have in every case been carefully revised and in some instances in great part rewritten for the present volume. The articles on 'The Grattan Parliament and Ulster,' 'The Earl-Bishop of Derry,' 'Lord Clare,' and 'Plunket and Catholic Emancipation,' appeared in the 'Edinburgh Review,' and that on 'Castlereagh and Ireland in 1798' appeared in the 'Quarterly Review.' From the last named periodical are also taken some passages in the article on 'The Grattan Parliament and Ulster' which were first printed in a review of the concluding volumes of Mr. Lecky's 'History of England in the Eighteenth Century.' The short paper on Sir Boyle Roche appeared in the 'Cornhill Magazine,' and that on 'Thomas Steele' is an expansion of a brief memoir contributed to the 'Dictionary of National Biography.' A portion of 'The French Invasion of Ireland' appeared in 'Macmillan's Magazine.' The author's cordial thanks are due to Mr. John Murray, Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co., and to Messrs. Macmillan and Co., as well as to the publishers of the present volume, for permission to reprint the Essays first published through their auspices.

In a volume of Essays an author is scarcely entitled to afflict the general reader who may take up his book with no studious intention with marginal annotations of the text. With rare exceptions, therefore, the notes in the body of the

work contain no references to authorities save as verifying actual quotations. But as the Essays represent a careful, and as far as possible exhaustive study of the accessible authorities for the period of history they embrace, it has been thought convenient to append lists of the more important books and documents which have been consulted. In some instances illustrative documents hitherto unpublished are given as appendices to the Essays to which they respectively relate. The subject of authorities must not be dismissed without acknowledgment of the writer's obligation to the 'Dictionary of National Biography.' It is impossible to overstate the extent of the service rendered to historical research by that invaluable publication.

C. LITTON FALKINER.

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# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE GRATTAN PARLIAMENT AND ULSTER . . . .	1
II. THE EARL-BISHOP OF DERRY . . . . .	58
III. LORD CLARE . . . . .	101
IV. CASTLEREAGH AND IRELAND IN 1798 . . . . .	155
V. PLUNKET AND ROMAN CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION . . . .	190
VI. SIR BOYLE ROCHE . . . . .	228
VII. THOMAS STEELE . . . . .	241
VIII. THE FRENCH INVASION OF IRELAND IN 1798 . . . .	250
INDEX . . . . .	351



# STUDIES IN IRISH HISTORY

## I

### *THE GRATTAN PARLIAMENT AND ULSTER*

EARLY in 1896 the citizens of Belfast were interested, and perhaps a little startled, by the announcement of a curious antiquarian discovery. In the course of the demolition, to provide a site for a new City Hall, of one of the old buildings of the city, the White Linen Hall, the workmen came upon the inscribed foundation-stone of the edifice. This celebrated structure, which stood until quite recently in Donegall Square in one of the most central positions in the city, was long among the most interesting for its historic associations and mercantile importance which the capital of Ulster contains. In the year 1784 the expansion of the linen trade, which had converted Belfast from the obscure and inconsiderable village which it may be described as having been even as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century into a great mercantile community, obliged those interested in its development to provide a suitable mart for its most important industry. The White Linen Hall was therefore erected in the prominent position it occupied till lately, on what was then described as 'the Castle Meadows, situate on the south side of the town and castle of Belfast,' but is now the head of the busiest thoroughfare in the middle of one of the busiest of cities.

Antiquaries had long been aware that the laying of the foundation-stone of this building, which was to be for more

than a century the scene of the mercantile enterprise of the most thriving community in Ireland, had been made the occasion of an elaborate ceremony. According to the summary of the proceedings contained in Benn's 'History of Belfast,' the new Linen Hall seemed to have just such a pedigree as might most naturally be expected by persons ignorant of the byways of Irish history in the case of an important institution in the heart of the Protestant North.

The Master of the Orange Lodge,' as we learn from the newspapers of the period, 'with the Wardens and Brethren, and accompanied by the members of other lodges, together with the Sovereign, burgesses, and principal inhabitants of the town, walked in procession; and in aid of the building the Orange Lodge presented the managers with 100*l*. The grandeur of the procession on this occasion could be equalled only by the public spirit that gave rise to so important an undertaking.<sup>1</sup>

The terms of the contemporary record might seem to indicate that the Orange Society was an institution of earlier origin than a study of its somewhat obscure history has hitherto led people to suppose. But when the foundation-stone was examined more closely, it was seen to contain a copper plate bearing an inscription which conclusively rebutted the theory of an Orange parentage, and set forth that 'the first stone of the Belfast White Linen Hall was laid the 28th of April, A.D. 1783, in the year of Masonry 5783, by John Brown, Esq., Worshipful Master of the Orange Lodge of Belfast, No. 257,' &c., thus showing that the Orange Lodge referred to was not, as the historian of Belfast had too hastily assumed, a branch of the Orange organisation, but was merely the denomination of a Masonic lodge. The origin denoted by this inscription, though possibly disappointing to the perfervid loyalty of the devoted adherents of the 'glorious, pious, and immortal memory,' was probably more satisfactory to the average Belfast citizen; for the foundation of the Linen Hall was thus associated with a craft not less noted for its loyalty to established insti-

<sup>1</sup> Benn's *History of the Town of Belfast*, vol. i. 348-9; see also *Belfast Historical Collections*.

tutions than for its antiquity and honourable fame. Nor was there anything in such a pedigree to indicate that the cherished honour of Ulster Unionism had ever been degraded by the bar sinister of that lapse into sedition and treason which marked the closing years of the eighteenth century in Ulster. But a more minute investigation of the buried title-deeds of the old Linen Hall disclosed records of a very different kind.

In a cavity of the stone had lain a glass tube, which on being opened was found to contain a roll of papers consisting of three separate documents. The first of these was a printed sheet giving an account of the meeting of the Volunteers at Dungannon on February 15, 1782, together with a report of a meeting held in Belfast on March 7 in that year, at which resolutions had been passed endorsing the action of the Volunteers. The second document was a cutting from the 'Belfast Newsletter' of April 25, 1783, containing a true copy of the 'Bill relating to Ireland which received the royal assent on Thursday last'—i.e. the Declaratory Act by which, in the year after the concession of an independent legislature, Great Britain recognised in terms the claim of Ireland to be bound only by the laws passed by the King and Parliament of Ireland, and to have all suits finally decided at home, without an appeal to England. The third of these documents was a written one couched in the following terms :—

Belfast, 28th April, 1783. These papers were deposited underneath this building by John M'Clean and Robert Bradshaw, with the intent that if they should hereafter be found, they may be an authentic information to posterity that by the firmness and unanimity of the Irish Volunteers, this kingdom (long oppressed) was fully and completely emancipated.

If in future times there should be an attempt to encroach upon the liberties of this country, let our posterity look up with admiration to the glorious example of their forefathers, who at this time formed an army, independent of Government, unpaid and self-appointed, of eighty thousand men. The discipline, order, and regularity of which army was looked upon by all Europe with wonder and astonishment.

Thus, by a curious chance, were the loyal citizens of Belfast reminded, at the very moment when, having but just emerged from the General Election of 1895 with its decisive rejection of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule policy, they were celebrating the triumph of the Union, that only a century ago their ancestors had entertained notions differing *toto cælo* from their own in regard to the constitutional relations between Great Britain and Ireland; and that in its external attitude, though not, as will be shown in a moment, in the essence of its political sentiment, Ulster had undergone as signal a revolution as has ever been recorded in the history of opinion.<sup>1</sup>

Of the many seeming inconsistencies of Irish conduct and character which perplex the sedate observation of Englishmen when they contemplate the history of Ireland, not the least confusing is that which is presented by the apparently inexplicable revolution in political sentiment which has taken place in Ulster within the last century. The would-be solver of the Irish difficulty, when he first investigates the question and lifts the curtain which hides a troubled past from a scarcely less troubled present, is perplexed by the discovery, which the most cursory glance reveals, that the unity of sentiment and consistency of conduct which the characteristics of the people of Ulster have led him to expect are belied by the history of that province. He is speedily made aware that Ulster was not always Unionist, that she

<sup>1</sup> See a report of the demolition of the White Linen Hall in the *Belfast Newsletter* and the *Northern Whig* of February 5, 1896. The following account of this incident is given in Joy's *Historical Collections relative to the Town of Belfast* (1817): 'At the laying of the first stone of the Belfast White Linen Hall there were deposited (beside the copper-plate inscription) a quantity of new shillings and halfpence, together with a large glass tube, hermetically sealed at both ends, so as not to admit the smallest particle of air. The procession was conducted by the Orange Lodge, so confessedly acknowledged to be the first in Europe, being composed of 150 gentlemen, among whom are noblemen and commoners of the very first distinction. The Orange Lodge was first revived in September 1780, at which time it merely consisted of the present Past-Master and two other gentlemen; since which time 147 gentlemen and noblemen have been admitted members of it, and the most munificent acts of charity and benevolence have arisen from this never-to-be-forgotten phoenix.' P. 233.



was not even always loyal ; but that, on the contrary, there was a period in her history, and that no more than a century ago, when she was not merely opposed to a legislative union, but in a great degree animated by frankly separatist and even republican convictions.

The astonishment of the ignorant or ill-informed inquirer on finding himself confronted with a new Irish enigma whose existence he had not even suspected is far from surprising ; for the controversies of the present generation have served not merely to obscure but to misrepresent the nature of the process by which the northern province has grown to be what it now is. For opposite reasons, both parties in the country have combined to convey, without designing it, a quite erroneous impression of the true facts. The Unionists of Ulster, proud of their loyalty to the Crown and Constitution of the United Kingdom, have naturally no desire to look back to the days when the great-grandfathers of many of them were as earnest and as active in their opposition as they now are in their attachment to the Legislative Union. The Nationalists, on the other hand, dominated by an ideal of independence which is Celtic rather than national, have forgotten, or choose not to recall, the days when the motive force of Irish nationalism was provided by the Protestant province and by the descendants of the English garrison of the Plantation. Each side unconsciously does its best, from shame for its past or pride in its present, to ignore what nevertheless belong to the most conclusively proved certainties of history. For it is plain beyond all controversy that Grattan could never have won the independence of the Irish Parliament had not Ulster been behind him ; that the decay of that Parliament dates from the day when the Irish Catholics were admitted to a partial community of privileges with their Protestant fellow-countrymen ; and that the union of the legislatures only became possible as a consequence of the efforts of the United Irishmen of the North to widen the breach between the three kingdoms. It is, too, a melancholy and humiliating, yet withal an instructive reflection for Irishmen that the era of their

story most deeply stained with the blood of fratricidal strife and marked by the wildest fury of religious hate is precisely that in which Ireland witnessed, for the first and last time, the temporary union of a majority of each of the two creeds in earnest and angry opposition to English rule.

But in addition to the distorting influences of contemporary politics and popular misconceptions, the judgment of the most impartial inquirer is liable to be disturbed by other obstacles to a complete apprehension of the facts. The copious literature which has grown up round the history of the last quarter of the eighteenth century in Ireland presents by no means an unclouded mirror. The history of lost causes supplies perhaps the least reliable chapters in the chronicles of mankind. Such topics lend themselves to the eloquence of a sympathetic imagination, to the poetry of pathos and romance. The elegies of patriotism are always touching, but they are not often accurate. Even if the historian is impartial, he is liable to succumb to the temptation to panegyrisé the chief personages in mitigation of their failures. The romance of history exalts a Mary Stuart or a Charles I. to degrade an Elizabeth or a Cromwell. If he is not impartial, the historian is apt to advance from the negative misrepresentation of animated apology to the positive falsehood of perverting or suppressing facts, and to overwhelm the successful cause with obloquy and insult. The history of Irish independence and Irish rebellion is not exempt from these infirmities. The materials of Irish history are predominantly partisan, and it is not always an easy task to disencumber truth from the meretricious adornments of fiction. The record of Irish patriotic movements has been compiled almost exclusively from one point of view by writers who deem it a crime to impute blame to their heroes and a blunder to admit merit in their adversaries. A whole literature of Irish treason has been formed on these principles, of which the best example is that comprehensive hagiology known as the 'Lives of the United Irishmen,' compiled by Dr. Madden, a biographer whose devotion can find no flaw in the perfection of these martyrs, and whose



notion of giving the other side of the picture is to draw up a lengthy Index Expurgatorius, in which are catalogued, with abundant aspersion or innuendo, the names of all who have dared to dissent from the popular point of view. Relatively speaking, but little, and that not always reliable, has been written on the other side, and it is not surprising that very mistaken impressions prevail in regard to some of the most striking features of the story.

It may well be doubted whether any political institution that has ever existed has been the subject of more extraordinary misconceptions than the Irish Constitution of 1782. Though much progress has been made of late years towards a correct appreciation of the true character of that Parliament which Grattan founded and which Pitt destroyed, it is still worth while to examine its framework, and to trace the causes of that gradual transformation in its essential features which after precipitating a violent civil strife necessitated the extinction of the parliamentary independence of Ireland. From such an examination it will incontestably appear that the Grattan Parliament was in no real sense of the word a representative institution ; that from the very commencement of its existence down to its close this Irish Parliament was an assembly representative merely of what, from a democratic point of view, was an inconsiderable section of the English population ; a Parliament filled with the nominees of absentee noblemen ; a Parliament of landlords, of placemen, and of Protestants. And it will appear further how it came about that this Parliament—Protestant, aristocratic, and loyal to the English connection as it was—was yet a Parliament whose existence could and did form a serious menace to the imperial unity of the three kingdoms ; and why, despite the British sympathies of its members, it was vehemently opposed to a union involving closer alliance with England.

The Grattan Parliament was, in the first place, a concession wrung from England in an hour of weakness, and acquiesced in by the English statesmen who assented to it, from that *fainéant* spirit that has so often fatally influenced English councils, and led to results ultimately most injurious

to the interests of those for whose welfare England is responsible. The revolt of the American colonies, and their successful assertion of independence, besides seriously crippling English resources, and rendering England's rulers doubly fearful of the danger of neglecting to conciliate Irish disaffection, gave a degree of plausibility to a policy of acquiescence in the demand which Flood and Grattan had long been urging. But it is plain that at the time when the concession was made the English statesmen who granted it believed they were presenting Irish patriots with a mere toy. And had they maintained the basis upon which the Grattan Parliament was created, a toy that institution must ever have remained. The independence of the Irish Parliament was not at all the same thing as the independence of the Irish people, and was never intended to be so. The Parliament, to which was confided the liberties claimed in Grattan's Declaration, was a Parliament friendly to English ascendancy. It was an assembly filled, as has just been pointed out, with the representatives of all the most stable classes in the island. It was impossible to imagine that a House of Commons composed of country gentlemen, of the nominees of great noblemen, and of lawyers trained in the traditions of English law, would be an assembly levelling in its tendencies. In truth, no representative assembly has ever existed more aristocratic in its sympathies, more conservative in the ideas of the majority of its members, than the Grattan Parliament as it was prior to 1793. Its general tendency, as shown by its attitude in respect to the Regency, was far more favourable to the power of the Crown and the preservation of the prerogative than that which characterised the contemporary English House of Commons. The acrimonious opposition offered by Grattan to Pitt's proposals in 1789 was due as much to the circumstance that the Irish statesman was in close alliance with Fox, as to any solid or sincere objection to the propositions of the Government. Even the leaders of the patriotic party were known to be perfectly loyal to the English connection, and had no particular desire, prior to 1793 at all events, to foster

extravagant claims. The heated debates which took place in College Green signified nothing more than the struggles of parties for place, and possessed no international significance. The two sections in the Irish Parliament prior to 1793, however acute the personal differences which might separate them, were cordial and unanimous in their attachment to the British Crown. Questions involving the substitution of a Roman Catholic for a Protestant ascendancy, or tending to establish national independence in any separatist sense, were as remote from the minds of such men as Lord Charlemont and the Duke of Leinster as the disestablishment of the Church of England is remote from the policy of Lord Salisbury. The only bone of contention, which caused any serious trouble, was the commercial question; and, in reference to the restrictions imposed upon Irish trade, the demand put forward was not for separate control of Customs, but simply for equal trade privileges with England.

The Grattan Parliament was therefore an assembly which, as originally constituted, might probably have been entrusted, with perfect safety to the British connection, with a larger share of legislative initiative than in practice it possessed. But the peculiar relations which subsisted between the Government and the House of Commons provided, had they been necessary, additional safeguards and securities. The position in which the Irish Parliament of 1782 stood as regards the Crown really resembled more closely the relations that existed between the English Parliament and the Tudor Sovereigns than the constitutional arrangement that prevailed in England in the eighteenth century. The Chief Secretary, the most important member of the Government, though seated in the lower house, was as little amenable to the constitutional censure of Parliament as Cardinal Wolsey was to the Parliament of Henry VIII. His business was to submit to the House of Commons measures decided upon, not by Ministers representative of a majority of the House, but by the English Cabinet after consultation with the Lord-Lieutenant. So long as Government possessed a

majority in College Green, and prior to 1793 it did continuously possess such a majority, the decrees of Westminster or Downing Street were for the most part certain to be registered in Dublin. Of course, successive Lords-Lieutenant strove to consult and conciliate Irish opinion, and the measures resolved on in London were naturally framed with a careful eye to the opinions entertained by Grattan and his followers. But the essential point is that whenever there was a divergence of view between the popular party and the Government the latter could feel secure of triumph.

Not only was the legislative machinery worked from England, but the appointment of all the higher officials was in English hands. The Lord-Lieutenant and his Chief Secretary, then as now, were of course the nominees of the English Cabinet, the representatives of whatever English party might chance to be in power. The Chancellor, throughout the whole of the eighteenth century and for long previously, was always an Englishman, until Lord Clare was appointed; and Clare's strong English sympathies had been well tried when he received the Seals. The bishops were appointed from England, and the Primate, who then took a not unimportant part in political affairs, was always a personage connected by close ties with England. The Castle officials were thoroughly English in feeling. The independence of the Parliament of 1782, hedged in, as we thus see it to have been, by all kinds of restrictions upon any national impulses which might have swayed it, consisted simply in its being constitutionally entitled to reject the policy recommended to its adoption by English statesmen. But, inasmuch as there never was a majority opposed to that policy, the independence of the Parliament, for all practical purposes, went for naught.

It may naturally be asked, however, if this estimate of the Grattan Parliament be correct, how was it enabled to gain that hold upon the affections of the people which, for a time, it undoubtedly possessed? Those only will require an answer to this question to whom the idiosyncrasies of Irish character are altogether unfamiliar. The Grattan



Parliament easily appealed to the fanciful and picturesque notions of the Celtic race. Remote as it was in the character, creed, and even in the nationality, of those who sat in it, from what a truly Irish assembly would have been, it was still in the eyes of the people the native Parliament of Ireland. It possessed a nominal independence, sufficient to make it an object for the genuine Irish love of show, and of patriotic sentiment. The Irish people have ever delighted in spectacle and display; and they delighted in their Dublin Parliament. They rapturously applauded the fine sentiments that, clothed in the gorgeous rhetoric of Grattan, appealed to their most grandiose aspirations. They were proud, and justly, of the matchless exhibitions of eloquence which dignified the arena of debate. The populace of Dublin, which may be said to bear something of the same relation to the Irish people that the Parisian mob does to the French, revelled in the opportunities for demonstration which the annual opening of Parliament, or the progress of some great debate or party struggle, was sure to afford. Though there was at times little reality in these parliamentary displays, the orations which they produced, the magnificence of the eulogiums upon the spirit of Irish freedom which Grattan loved to pronounce, filled the people with the liveliest satisfaction. Some allowance, too, must be made, in accounting for the favour with which this assembly was regarded, for the material benefits that accrued to the metropolis, and in a measure to the country at large, from the existence of a Parliament in Dublin. The wealthy magnates who sat in it of necessity resided in the capital for a large part of the year. They were closely interested in the country and kept in contact with the people, and the commercial classes in Dublin naturally profited largely by the residence within its boundaries of so many gentlemen of fortune. An aristocratic society was maintained in the capital, which to this day contains the evidences of the prosperity which the Grattan Parliament brought to it. The chief mansions in the city, now deserted by the descendants of their founders and converted into public offices,

as well as almost all the best residential squares and streets, date from the time when the city was thronged with all the opulence of Ireland.

For in all its essential features, in almost all that attracts the attention of the passing traveller, the Dublin of to-day is the Dublin of 1800. With the exception of the Castle and the Cathedrals, the only buildings of real antiquity which it contains, almost every structure of interest in the city, and every distinctive feature of the capital, apart from its natural environs, it owes to the eighteenth century. Scarcely any of the buildings on which Dublin now prides itself existed in the seventeenth century, and curiously little was added in the nineteenth. Of the distinguishing features of the centre of the city, the Parliament House, now the Bank of Ireland, was built in the first half of the eighteenth century, and the great façade of Trinity College was erected, at the cost of Parliament, in the second. Even what is now the handsome abode of a democratic Corporation is only the Royal Exchange of the eighteenth century; whilst the Four Courts and Custom House, the two chief adornments of the River Liffey as it flows through the city, are the monuments of eighteenth-century architects. Nor are the memories of the most vivid period of Irish history in the Dublin of to-day confined to its public buildings. The residential quarters belong as exclusively as the public edifices to the same period. The great squares commemorate in their names the Viceroys and nobility of the eighteenth century, and few of the more important streets were unbuilt a hundred years ago. The whole character of the city remains unchanged, and the ghost of an eighteenth-century citizen moving through the principal thoroughfares on a moonlight night would find little in their appearance with which he was not familiar, save the handsome Post Office, the buildings round Leinster House, and the public statues; adornments in which Dublin, never opulent, was notably deficient before the erection of the monuments to Nelson, Burke, Goldsmith, Grattan and O'Connell. Great sanitary improvements and changes of other kinds there have been, of course, but

whereas during the eighteenth century street architecture underwent a complete revolution in the older parts of the city, and great additions were made to the residential quarters, the external appearance of the capital has since remained practically unaltered.

Of these improvements and enlargements by far the greater portion belong to the latter half of the century, for the great social splendour which characterised the Irish metropolis from 1780 to 1800 was in marked contrast to the petty and provincial Dublin of the previous generation. The contrast is one which no student of the Ireland of those periods can easily miss, and is pointed by a comparison between the era of Swift and that of Grattan. Between the dirty, dingy, and narrow streets which formed the principal thoroughfares of the city at the earlier period, and the ample thoroughfares and spacious squares which grew up during the later epoch, and still lend distinction to the metropolis, there was little in common. Since the splendid era of the first Duke of Ormond, in which the capital had been greatly enlarged and beautified, little if anything had been done to develop the city. The Dublin of Swift's day could boast indeed its Stephen's Green, though the houses on its borders were still few in number, and the Beaux' Walk, as Mrs. Delany's sprightly letters testify, was then in its early glory as a fashionable resort. But Merrion Square and Fitzwilliam Square, Kildare Street and the great mansions of which the Duke of Leinster's was the chief, upon the south side of the city; Rutland Square, Mountjoy Square and even Sackville Street on the north side, were then unbuilt and unthought of. Fashionable Dublin, as it became half a century later, there was none, and well-to-do Dublin, the Dublin, that is, of the professional classes and of the very few members of the resident aristocracy who sported a town house, were crowded together in the district of which St. Patrick's Cathedral is the centre.

The change in habits and manners, the advance in the luxuries of life, between the first and fourth quarters of the eighteenth century, were not due, as similar progress in

the nineteenth century has usually been due, to increased facilities of locomotion, or the development of the sources of material wealth. It is to be ascribed primarily to that accident in the evolution of the political system under which the affairs of Ireland were then governed which will be noticed later in this volume. Just as at the present day important social results are anticipated by many as the result of the establishment of a royal residence in Ireland and the frequent presence there of members of the Royal Family, so the visible improvement of the Irish Metropolis in the eighteenth century was mainly owing to the change which was made in 1767 in the conditions under which the Lord-Lieutenancy was held. Prior to that date the Irish Parliament met only every alternate year, and the Viceroys were practically non-resident, not deeming it their business to do more than attend in Dublin for a few weeks at the commencement of each biennial session ; and with the exception of the Lords Justices, who governed in the absence of the Viceroys, few even of the peers resident in Ireland thought it worth while to live in the capital, which was practically without a Court during the prolonged absence of the representative of the Sovereign. Those of the aristocracy whose fortunes afforded the luxury of attendance at Court preferred to pay their respects to their Sovereign at St. James's, whither they flocked in such numbers as caused Bishop Berkeley to ask in his *Querist* 'whether London is not to be considered the metropolis of Ireland.' By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, the system of viceregal absenteeism had become a source not only of disadvantage to Ireland but of inconvenience to the English Cabinet ; and it was ordained by the King that constant residence in Ireland would be required of the Lord-Lieutenant during his tenure of office. Lord Townshend, the brother of the brilliant Charles Townshend, was found ready to accept the new conditions, and not only did his viceroyalty inaugurate a new era in Irish politics, but from it dates the great period of Dublin as the capital of a resident aristocracy. From the viceroyalty of the Marquis of



Townshend dates that expansion of Dublin and of the application to its architecture of all the resources of decorative art for which it became so remarkable during the last quarter of the century, and which still enriches so many of its mansions with memorials of Angelica Kauffman and with such admirable examples of the work of Italian artists.

But while the Grattan Parliament as originally constituted was a body which could threaten little danger to imperial unity, while its sessions provided for the people a succession of attractive pageants and numerous occasions for the effervescence of a not too noxious excitement, and while its material advantages rendered it popular in the capital, its character was liable to be totally changed as a result of the Relief Act of 1793. Only a bigot would argue that the admission of Catholics to the franchise was necessarily a source of danger to the connection between Great Britain and Ireland. Many of the Catholic leaders were men of approved loyalty, and many of the advocates of Emancipation honestly believed that the moderate views of the leaders were fairly representative of those of the bulk of their followers. Yet the admission of Roman Catholics to the franchise was undoubtedly fraught with danger.

It was dangerous not because the newly enfranchised voters were Roman Catholics, but because, in addition to being Roman Catholics, they were anti-English in sentiment. The masses in Ireland had never become reconciled to the rule of the Saxon invader, they were permeated with an intense spirit of nationalism, which, so long as they were powerless to give expression to it, remained a harmless sentiment, but which, so soon as they were placed in a position to give effect to it, became a source of real danger. The harm lay in the admission, not of Roman Catholics, but of the disloyal, to the franchise; and the Roman Catholics, from causes unnecessary to discuss, were, unfortunately, disloyal. It was the knowledge of this fact that convinced Pitt and his Irish advisers of the inevitable necessity for a Union, from the moment of the passing of the Relief Act. They knew that the sham freedom which might please a people while they

were powerless to secure a more real liberty would cease to satisfy that people when the weapon of the franchise was once placed in their hands. He saw that demands would ere long be made, wholly inconsistent with the arrangement of 1782, which must prove absolutely subversive of the system of management of Irish affairs from London, and must ultimately lead to a really dangerous separatist movement.

From all this it follows that the passing of the Act of Union was practically forced upon Pitt by the compulsion of circumstances, by the ominous development under the Grattan Parliament of principles and impulses absolutely antagonistic to imperial unity, as a measure essential to avert the danger which imminently threatened the integrity of the Empire. Fox himself had written in 1783, with respect to the demands of the Volunteers: 'The question is not whether this or that measure shall take place, but whether the constitution which Irish patriots are so proud of having established shall exist, or whether the government shall be as purely military as ever it was under the Prætorian bands.' And the enfranchisement of the Irish masses, followed by the Irish rebellion, was not long in reproducing this dilemma in a form from which there could be no escape. But before proceeding to analyse the circumstances which led to the destruction of Irish independence, it is worth while in connection with the discussion of the true nature of the Grattan Parliament to dwell upon the paradoxical chance which, after the Rebellion had been suppressed, brought it to pass that Pitt in passing the Act of Union should find the most formidable obstacle to his policy not in the anti-English masses of the people, not in the anti-Protestant feelings of the Catholic population, but in the attitude of the oligarchical faction, Protestant in faith and British in sympathy, by which the politics of the Irish Parliament came to be controlled; and that almost the only whole-hearted support accorded to the ministers was rendered by the accredited representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.

The dominant influence in the Irish Parliament was the

influence of the borough-mongers. These, of course, were either wealthy noblemen or great landed commoners, of whose attachment to the British connection no possible doubt could be entertained. But they were opposed to a Union, because the rotten boroughs which they held were a substantial property and an immense source of influence. To them a Union meant the destruction of their property and the loss of much of their importance. When these persons were bribed by the offer of peerages, or steps in the peerage, to surrender their power and influence, it was not as patriots tempted to sell the independence of their country that they were approached, but as the owners of what was then, and for thirty years longer continued to be in the English Parliament, a recognised source of territorial and political importance. Had they been men who held an established position as patriots, who were fired with the genuine spirit of Irish nationality, they would have merited all those charges which have been brought against them of having sold their nation's liberties. But they were far from being attached to Home Rule in the sense in which that term is now understood. They desired, as warmly as any Englishman could desire it, the unity of the Three Kingdoms, and in assenting to Pitt's measure they agreed to an arrangement under which that which they had always professed to wish to preserve would be effectually secured.

It is, of course, impossible to feel anything but contempt for the motives that influenced a number of them at first to oppose, and afterwards to acquiesce in, the measure of the Union. In the words of Mr. Lecky, 'the great borough-owners perceived that a legislative union must take the virtual government of Ireland out of their hands, and a crowd of needy legislators saw in it the extinction of a system under which they could always, by judicious voting, obtain places for themselves or their relatives.'<sup>1</sup> But it is ridiculous to pretend that the corruption employed to secure such votes was corruption applied to lure from their allegiance to the popular cause the outspoken advocates of Irish

<sup>1</sup> Vol. viii. p. 279.

nationality. What occurred was, simply, that the owners of boroughs were compensated for the loss of their influence by a lavish distribution of places or titles, and thereupon the seats at the disposal of such owners were either vacated by their former representatives in favour of men not pledged to oppose a Union, or, as happened in most cases, the occupants of those seats obediently followed the behests of those who had placed them in Parliament. De Quincey, who was a witness, it is strange to remember, of the final scene when the Grattan Parliament sat for the last time, has expressed his astonishment that the senators of Ireland could so lightly part with their rights and privileges. The explanation of their apathy is that they had always taken a purely pecuniary view of the value of their seats, and, having obtained what they accepted as a fair equivalent for the loss, they could readily sacrifice the external dignity of their membership of an assembly which many of them had always despised as provincial.

It is equally impossible to deny that methods unfortunately familiar in the politics of the eighteenth century from the time of Walpole were made use of to overcome the reluctance of opponents of the Union to assent to that inevitable measure. But who were the corrupters and who the corrupted? This is a subject which has over and over again been discussed; and the weight of evidence certainly points to the conclusion that Pitt's agents in bringing about the Union did resort to the illicit expedients of corruption by the offer of peerages and titular distinctions of all kinds, in order to gain support for the measure. Attempts have been made by zealous partisans to deny that these influences were brought to bear by Lords Cornwallis, Castlereagh, and Clare, to bend recalcitrant politicians to their will. But the well-meaning defence which has been set up cannot be successfully maintained. Though the gravity of the charges has been grossly exaggerated, a candid review of the evidence compels the conclusion that peerages and other bribes were given on the understanding that the votes in the control of the recipients should be cast in favour of the Government measure. It is clear that Pitt having

made up his mind as to the necessity of a Union, and having resolved to bring it about, the three ministers of his will in Ireland set themselves to the task of conciliating the opponents of his policy by the only efficacious means; and that, for the purpose of removing the obstruction offered to the measure by certain influential Irishmen, they did not scruple to hold out the substantial inducements of place and title as a means of assuaging opposition. It must, however, in fairness be remembered, with reference to what is called corruption, that the procuring of votes by the distribution of titles differed in degree and not in kind from the methods always employed, and properly employed, by Government to reward political service.

Apart from the circumstance that the illicit influence exerted by the Irish Government to secure the passing of the Union was not applied towards sapping *bonâ fide* nationalism, it is incontestable that the opposition of many among those who resisted the blandishments of administration was based upon instincts and motives the reverse of patriotic in the modern Irish sense of that adjective. The most eminent among the upholders of Irish nationality after the Grattan model were men deeply imbued with those ideas of aristocratic privilege that long marked the Whig nobility of England. Charlemont, next to Grattan's the most honoured name connected with the legislative independence of Ireland, viewed the Union with horror, because, rightly or wrongly, he believed it to be inimical to the interests of his order. He considered that the absenteeism which a Union would be certain to promote, the slackening of the close ties that ought to exist between the landed proprietors and their tenantry, would lead to the destruction of the influence of property. This doubtless was not only, as after events have too truly proved in many instances, a sound view, but it was also a sincerely patriotic one. Yet patriotic as was the attitude of Charlemont and his friends, it was patriotism of a very different sort from that which is conveyed by the word in the language of modern Irish politicians; and it would be hard to find nowadays the Nationalist who



regrets the Union for the reasons that caused Lord Charlemont to oppose it.

Another influence strongly adverse to the Union was the attitude of the Irish bar. Its opposition was not unnatural, but it was almost altogether dictated by selfish considerations. The most brilliant parts in the drama of Irish independence had been played by members of the legal profession. Next to those of Flood and Grattan, the names that have rendered the Grattan Parliament illustrious as a temple of Attic oratory are those of Irish lawyers. Yelverton, Burgh, Fitzgibbon, Curran, and Plunket were men who would have added lustre to the deliberations of any assembly that ever existed. The members of the legal profession crowded the benches of the House of Commons, and found there a more rapid road to the celebrity and notoriety which are so great aids to legal eminence than they could hope to traverse at the Four Courts. They could force their way, by virtue of their political influence, into numerous positions, which, once they were deprived of their seats, would be closed to them; and it is no imputation upon the honour of the Irish bar that its members should have desired to preserve an institution which so much enhanced the dignity and importance of their profession. The desire, therefore, to resist a Union was fostered by a variety of causes which had no connection whatever with the desire for national independence. Such a desire was present in the breasts of a large section of the Irish people. But those in whom it was most strongly implanted looked forward to something very different from the constitutional liberty which Grattan and his friends might have been content with. Wolfe Tone had desired independence, so had the brothers Sheares, so had the fanatics of Scullabogue; but the independence they looked for was a total emancipation from British rule, an absolute liberty to set up an independent Ireland hostile to England and ready to co-operate with her enemies.

For these reasons, then, the Grattan Parliament was opposed to a Union; but how came it that an assembly so largely representative of the most Conservative elements in

the country was also an assembly which threatened, if permitted to remain, to destroy the Imperial unity of the three kingdoms? In dealing with this part of the story, it must never be forgotten that there was a wide difference between the Irish Parliament as it was constituted in 1782 and as it had become by 1800. No doubt in the general character of those who sat in it, the Grattan Parliament was the same from beginning to end; but the body by whom those representatives were elected underwent a radical change in 1793. The admission to the franchise in that year of large numbers of the Roman Catholic population produced a conflict of sentiment and policy between the electorate and its representatives which was highly dangerous and likely to lead to serious results. The Roman Catholics who were then accorded the right to vote were imbued with ideas of national independence very far in advance of those which actuated such men as Grattan and Charlemont. They were impregnated with the same spirit of militant nationalism which has been the motive force of every Irish movement that has ever attained any hold upon Ireland since that period. The spirit that fired O'Connell to attempt to obtain Repeal; the spirit that dominated the men of '48; the spirit that Smith O'Brien found himself unable to control, and that precipitated his Quixotic enterprise; the spirit that was rife again in '67; the spirit which, however its existence may have been denied, has given force to every Irish movement which ever achieved anything, in or out of Parliament, through the whole course of the nineteenth century—this spirit, altogether hostile as it is to English rule, dominated the newly enfranchised electorate. But while the Roman Catholics were thus admitted within the Constitution, their exercise of the franchise was barred by the most illogical limitations. The people were permitted to vote, but the limits within which that liberty was to be exercised were very narrowly defined. Their suffrages could only be cast in favour of the members of an alien race, a rejected creed, and a superior class; of those who were determined to maintain privilege in every form,—of men, in short, who had absolutely nothing in common with those to whom

they were now to owe their election to sit in Parliament. Obviously, a system so artificial could not possibly be maintained. The people were certain to claim, and they quickly began to claim, not only the right to vote, but the right to the unfettered choice of those to whom their votes should be given. They threatened to insist upon sweeping measures of Parliamentary Reform and of Catholic Emancipation far in excess of what English statesmen then, or for many years after, believed to be safe. The charge that the Rebellion was the provoked and premeditated precursor of the Union is quite beside the mark. The Union had its origin five years earlier, in the Relief Act of 1793.

Mr. Lecky has well pointed out<sup>1</sup> what he rightly calls 'a fatal fault' in the Constitution of 1782. The machinery of government in Ireland differed radically in design from the constitutional practice that has grown up in England and with which we are all familiar. The officials of the Government in Ireland were not responsible to the Irish Parliament. The Minister who introduced the Government measures to the House of Commons was the Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant, who was always an Englishman, and who on his arrival in Ireland was invariably returned at once for some Government borough, to enable him to conduct Government business in the House of Commons. The Lord-Lieutenant and his Chief Secretary were the representatives, not of an Irish but of an English administration, and their tenure of office depended altogether upon the balance of parties in the English House of Commons. So long as the Irish Parliament was likely to remain a loyal body, it might be easy enough to manage it on this basis, though the reception accorded to Sir John Orde's twenty commercial resolutions in 1785 showed how difficult it might sometimes prove to secure Irish assent to the policy dictated from England. But it became plain, from the moment that the Roman Catholics were admitted to the franchise, that their privileges could not be limited by that concession. If they had a right to vote for representatives in a Protestant

<sup>1</sup> Vol. vi. p. 315.



Parliament, they had a right also to sit in Parliament themselves, they had a right to fill official positions, they were entitled to object to a Protestant Establishment. In short, there was no logical reason why Ireland with a native Parliament should not be governed 'according to Irish ideas.'

But if this was so, the whole system of English government in Ireland was threatened with the gravest danger. Obviously, if the whole, or a part, of the Roman Catholic demands were conceded, one of two results must follow. Either the House of Commons, filled as it would become with the representatives of Roman Catholic opinion, would place itself in avowed antagonism to the representatives of English rule on every conceivable question that could come before the Parliament, in which case all government would be at a standstill; or Pitt and his colleagues must make up their minds to the destruction of the *status quo*, they must assent to Ireland being governed by Irishmen in an Irish Parliament modelled after the English pattern, and they must allow a Ministry to be formed in Ireland which would reflect the opinions and carry out the policy of the majority in the Irish Parliament. To consent to such a change would have been to surrender every shadow of Imperial control over the island, to establish an independent Legislature with uncontrolled powers, and to erect a native Government answerable to the majority of a native House of Commons. Such a change would have been tantamount to an absolute revolution in Ireland, it would have been equivalent to a concession of Home Rule in its fullest and most undisguised form, and there would practically remain, under this enlarged Constitution, no connection between the two islands save the vague and unsubstantial link which the Crown would continue to supply. Such being, in the eyes of responsible statesmen in Ireland, the inevitable result of continuing to countenance a policy of concession, it is small wonder that Lord Clare and the leading exponents of the Castle policy should have pressed upon Pitt the necessity for a Union, or that the latter should have acquiesced in the expediency of the suggested course.

It may naturally be asked, however, if such were the views of Irish Ministers in endeavouring to procure a Union, how was it that a considerable section of Roman Catholic opinion could be found which was favourable to the measure? That such a section of opinion did exist cannot be doubted; but historians have, perhaps, exaggerated the sympathy with which the action of the Catholic leaders who countenanced the Union was viewed by the bulk of their followers. The majority of the latter would certainly have preferred an extension of Roman Catholic liberties under the Parliamentary *régime* inaugurated by Grattan. Their leaders, however, saw the impossibility of this. They felt that Lord Clare's influence would prevail with Pitt to prevent any final measure of Catholic Emancipation from being submitted to a local Parliament, and they appear to have believed that a Union would be followed immediately by such a measure. In this belief they were probably encouraged by private assurances as to the state of Pitt's mind upon the subject. Although it was the influence of Clare which had led Pitt to contemplate a Union, there is no doubt that, in embracing the proposal, the English Minister was guided also by motives which differed from those of his adviser, and were concealed from the knowledge of the latter. Pitt had early become persuaded of the abstract justice of Catholic Emancipation; his difficulty was only as to the mode in which that boon could safely be conceded to the Irish people. In 1793 he had considered the project of a Union, and had advanced as one argument in its favour that it would remove whatever dangers might be supposed to lie in concession to Catholic claims. He was convinced that in an Irish Parliament emancipation would be attended by the evils which Clare anticipated; but he believed that in an Imperial Parliament, where the Irish representatives would contribute less than one-sixth of the whole House of Commons, the influence of the Catholics could no longer be dangerous. Accordingly, in the instructions given to Lord Cornwallis for his guidance in negotiating the preliminaries of the Union, the Lord-Lieutenant was empowered to

approach the Roman Catholic leaders in a conciliatory spirit; and though no direct promise was made to them, the notion was conveyed that, while the English Government had resolved to make no concessions to the independent Parliament, much might be granted when once a legislative Union should be established. It is highly probable that assurances much more explicit would have been given, had not Pitt been aware that any programme of Roman Catholic relief would be certain to meet with serious opposition in a quarter where opposition was particularly difficult to cope with.

Before the Union, as well as after it, George III. entertained the same rooted objection to Catholic Emancipation which, in the year after the former measure was carried, led to Pitt's resignation of office. In 1795, immediately after the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, the Irish Chancellor, for the purpose of placing an effectual bar in the way of any subsequent attempt to revive the policy which Fitzwilliam had endeavoured to champion, entered, through the medium of Lord Westmorland, into private correspondence with the King. In a series of letters he laid before the Sovereign certain alleged constitutional objections to any measure of emancipation. He had always laid stress upon the inviolability of the Protestant Constitution of the United Kingdom. 'I consider,' he said in 1793, 'a repeal of the Act of Supremacy in any of the hereditary dominions of the Crown of Great Britain to be as much beyond the power of Parliament as a repeal of the Great Charter, or a repeal of the Bill of Rights,' and these views he urged with success upon his Sovereign.<sup>1</sup> Pitt, therefore, well knowing the King's settled convictions in regard to this matter, could not authorise Lord Cornwallis to do more than give general assurances to the Roman Catholics of the friendly disposition of the Ministry.

The Protestantism of the Grattan Parliament and its utter want of resemblance to anything which modern patriots understand by Nationalism have at length come to be understood, though the process has been a slow one. But many

<sup>1</sup> See the essay on Lord Clare, *infra*, pp. 134-136.

intelligent and fairly well informed people still labour under an hallucination no less extraordinary than that which for so long caused that Parliament to be taken for an assembly representative of modern Irish ideas. It seems to be still supposed by persons who should know better that the celebrated Volunteers by whom the independence of the Grattan Parliament was won were the offspring of an effective union of Protestant and Catholic, of Saxon and Celt, for the national regeneration of Ireland. Yet nothing could be more widely remote from the reality. When in 1778 the Chief Secretary of the day, Sir Richard Heron, made his extraordinary confession that the Government of Great Britain could spare for the defence of Ulster and Ulster commerce no more than 'a troop or two of horse, or part of a company of invalids,' it was in defence of a province not less attached than in the days of the Plantation to the British connection that the people of Belfast and its neighbourhood armed in the name of their king. Only eighteen years had elapsed since Thurot's invasion, the capture of Carrickfergus, and the threatened destruction of Belfast had evoked a spontaneous outburst of loyalty, and there had been no change in the interval in the temper of the people of Ulster.<sup>1</sup>

Few facts of Irish history are plainer, or at the same time more reluctantly acknowledged by popular writers, than the Protestantism, and it may even be said the militant Protestantism, of the only national movement which has ever succeeded in its aims, and which gave to Ireland the only semblance of independence which she has ever been able to boast. It has been said that Grattan could never have gained the independence of the Irish Parliament if he had not had Ulster behind him. It must be added that by the Ulster which ranged itself behind Grattan must be understood an Ulster not merely predominantly but absolutely Protestant in respect both of the classes who possessed the franchise and of those who contributed to

<sup>1</sup> For a striking illustration of the character of Ulster sentiment in 1760, see Crofton Croker's *Popular Songs illustrative of the French Invasions of Ireland* in the Percy Society's Publications, vol. xxi.

form public opinion. Grattan himself came into Parliament as the nominee of Lord Charlemont for the Ulster borough from which his patron's title was derived. The great 'General' of the Volunteers was not alone a Protestant, but a fervid, not to say a bigoted, opponent of Catholic claims. Charlemont's conviction that the franchise, still more the admission of Catholics to Parliament, could never be conceded consistently with the unity of the Empire and the maintenance of the rights of property, was never entirely surrendered, though in the last year of his life he consented to return an emancipator for his own borough, and is said to have waived to the pertinacity of Plunket the cherished principles which had impaired the cordiality of his co-operation with Grattan.<sup>1</sup> If the Protestantism of the Volunteer leader be not held to establish that of the majority of his followers, let it be remembered that the Mecca of the Irish Volunteers was the statue of King William III. in College Green, round which, on each anniversary of the monarch's birth, that patriot army was wont to parade, and at which for more than a century, and down to the Lord-Lieutenancy of the Duke of Bedford in 1806, the Government and, until the Union, the Parliament of Ireland did annual homage to the principles of the Revolution. It would be too much to say that there were no Roman Catholics among the Volunteers; and it may perhaps be fairly contended that they would have formed a considerable element in the movement had Protestant Ulster been willing at that time to welcome a Roman Catholic alliance. But so far were the Volunteers from representing a union of creeds that the great Dungannon Convention was held within the walls of a Protestant church.

But if the Volunteers of Ireland were thus Protestant in their origin, and Protestant in their memories, they differed not less widely from their Celtic and Catholic countrymen in their political objects. It is true, indeed, that their organisation was in a large degree the outcome of British misgovernment, and that as its military importance was the result of the incapacity of the authorities to guard Ireland from foreign

<sup>1</sup> See the essay on Plunket, *infra*, p. 204.



attack, so its political power was founded on the inability of her rulers to give contentment to the country. In the fine image of Walter Hussey Burgh, 'England had sown her laws in dragons' teeth and they had sprung up as armed men.' But the tyranny against which the Volunteers cried out was not the religious tyranny of the penal laws against the Roman Catholics, but the commercial tyranny by which the enterprise of Protestant Ireland, and especially of Protestant Ulster, was fettered or forbidden. Their first efforts as a political organisation were directed to securing free trade, their second to the attainment of parliamentary reform. They thought little, and cared even less, for the Catholic body, and it was only when they found themselves unable to coerce the parliamentary oligarchy to a grant of privileges—which, had they been granted, they would have carefully confined to the Protestant minority—that they called the Roman Catholics to their aid. The eighteenth century in Ireland has been not inaptly described as a period during which a privileged aristocracy and a privileged Church tyrannised over the Protestant population and the Protestant Dissenters, who, by way of recompense for their submission, were allowed to tyrannise, in turn, over the Roman Catholic community. The patriotism of the Volunteers was not sufficient to emancipate them completely from this curious conception of religious liberty, and even while they clamoured for the removal of restrictions which pressed injuriously on their own interests, they were not unwilling to rivet the fetters which bound a subject race and proscribed a detested religion.

That this is no exaggerated description of the attitude of the real founders of the independent Parliament towards the great majority of their fellow-subjects is proved to demonstration both by the proceedings of the Volunteer Convention and by the deliberately expressed opinions of some of the most conspicuous among them. Lord Charlemont's is not the greatest name in the history of the Volunteer movement, but it is among the most distinguished, and may be said to be in some respects the most representative. Lord

Charlemont was not a statesman ; his mental horizon was too limited to allow him to earn that much-abused title, which has nevertheless been often given to much less public-spirited, and perhaps not much more able men. But by virtue of the very narrowness of his prejudices, the unanimously elected 'Commander-in-Chief of the army in Ulster,' who was himself an Ulster man, and who retained, be it remembered, the confidence of the Volunteers long after Grattan had forfeited it, is a safer guide to the real sentiments of his followers than men of greater abilities and more detachment of view. And this is what Lord Charlemont, the lifelong champion of Irish independence, writing many years after 1782, thought of the policy of concession to the Roman Catholics and of the measures which had been granted for their relief—measures which down to that period were confined to the Act of 1778, conferring the power to take leases for 999 years and the right of alienation, and the Act of 1782, repealing the Statute of Queen Anne, by which Catholics were debarred from holding landed property :—

In a country unfortunately circumstanced like Ireland . . . where the many are to be governed by the few, where a rooted antipathy has long subsisted between the parties governing and governed, grounded on mutual injuries, and nourished by antiquated and abortive claims on the one side, and on the other by a perpetual dread that these claims might one day be successfully asserted—where the great mass of the people profess a religion perfectly distinct and even averse from that by law established, and not only in its principles and tenets hostile to civil liberty, but intimately connected with the claims above mentioned, and from its identity with that of the surrounding nations likely on every struggle to be protected by them from motives both religious and political—in a country, I say, so circumstanced there are two points which never can, with safety, be conceded by the governing few ; namely, the free and uncontrolled use of arms, and a share in the legislature. Neither of these points were, I allow, ceded by the Acts in question . . . but everything short of these fundamentals was given to the Catholics. . . . Our liberality in the paroxysm of its fever was madly profuse. We gave too much at a time, never reflecting on the necessary prudence of reserving something to satisfy future



cravings, something which might without ruin be still conceded.<sup>1</sup>

The action of the Volunteers was fully in accordance with these views, and what little was effected at this time in the direction of relaxing the penal laws was due rather to the desire of the Government to strengthen themselves against the Protestant reformers by enlisting Catholic sympathy on their side than to any efforts of the popular party. Neither the parliamentary leaders in the Declaration of Right nor the rank and file of the Volunteers at the Dungannon Convention gave serious thought either to Roman Catholic enfranchisement or to the removal of agrarian grievances. The Convention approved, indeed, the removal of the restrictions which had prevented Roman Catholics from holding land, but they made no suggestion of further concessions ; and indeed those concessions, when submitted to Parliament, were not pressed by any of their most influential leaders. It is noteworthy that as late as 1787 the first Earl of Moira, though his successor was according to the ideas of his time an almost violent liberal, was strongly opposed to the enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics, as a measure incompatible with the preservation of that Protestant ascendancy which even Radicals then considered an inseparable element in the Constitution ; and Grattan himself could speak at this period of the repeal of the Statute of Queen Anne as giving freedom to his Catholic fellow-countrymen. It was upon free trade, and through the action of the Volunteers, that Irish independence was won. Even when, after the victory, the offended vanity of Flood and the pompous patriotism of Charlemont, dissatisfied with the Constitution of 1782, endeavoured to make the Volunteers the lever for obtaining further concessions, and when Grattan's refusal to co-operate with them had made the conciliation of the Roman Catholics an object of greater importance, the Catholic claims received equally scant recognition. The demand then made for simple repeal was

<sup>1</sup> Lord Charlemont's 'Memoirs of his Political Life,' *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, Twelfth Report, App. part x. p. 47.

accompanied by a demand for the reform of Parliament ; yet in the plan submitted to the Dungannon Convention of 1783 it was not only not proposed to include Roman Catholics in the benefits of the desired reforms, but an amendment to that effect was expressly negatived, Charlemont scouting as an 'alarming idea' the suggestion that the Constitution could never be completely settled till the elective franchise was extended to persons of all religions. In his autobiography he speaks of this amendment as 'the first appearance of that unaccountable frenzy which afterwards became so dangerously epidemical.'

Nor were the Volunteers of Leinster much more favourably inclined towards concession than their brethren in the North. In Dublin it was indeed resolved, at the instance of a friend of the Catholics, 'that the rights of suffrage ought to be extended to all those, and to none but those, who were likely to use it for the public good ;' but this liberal sentiment became a somewhat equivocal compliment when the same meeting refused to agree to its apparent corollary that the attachment to the rights of the Constitution manifested by the Roman Catholics merited some extension of the elective franchise to 'that respectable body.' Similar unsatisfactory results attended similar efforts in the same direction at the General Convention of all the provinces held in November at Dublin, though on this occasion the Catholic claims had the patronage of Frederick Augustus Hervey, Bishop of Derry and Earl of Bristol.<sup>1</sup> And though it seems that a few Northern Dissenters began to manifest the first symptoms of 'that strange madness' by which they were subsequently actuated, the majority were clear that the limit of concession had been reached. They declined to consider any proposals for conferring the franchise, being convinced, with their leader, that the possession of such a privilege must render Ireland a Roman Catholic country, totally break its connection with England, and force it into an alliance with France or Spain. They were equally fearful, it may be added, of an investigation into the

<sup>1</sup> See the essay on the Earl Bishop of Derry, *infra*, p. 80.

title of Protestant property and of an attempt by the Roman Catholic majority to repossess themselves of the land the moment they were strong enough to do so.

Few would now attempt to defend the justice or reasonableness of these views. They are interesting, however, as illustrating the continuity of Ulster sentiment, and as serving to remind us of the political and religious atmosphere which prevailed in Ireland, and in Great Britain for that matter, a century ago. But easy as it is to scoff at the narrowness or bigotry of such notions, those who condemn them should first be sure that in like conditions they would have known how to display a liberality which was foreign to all the notions of the time. They should remember that in 1782 the English Revolution and the attempt of James II. to establish a Roman Catholic absolutism were not a century old, that such an extreme of religious intolerance as the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was of no more ancient date, and that the title of the English and Protestant population, but more particularly that of the people of Ulster, was founded in successive confiscations of the property of the native Irish, which were far from having passed out of popular recollection. Nor is it less germane to reflect that at this period the liberties of Irish Roman Catholics, however grossly restricted in comparison with those of their Protestant fellow-countrymen, were yet far in advance of those conceded to Protestants by any Roman Catholic State in Europe. For it was then an almost universally accepted maxim that nonconformity to the State religion was a conclusive disqualification for any share in the political duties of citizenship.

It thus appears that the much-lauded Parliament of 1782-1800 was not only Protestant in its composition, but was Protestant, in modern phraseology, in its mandate. However completely it ignored or disowned the opinions of two-thirds of the nation, absolutely lacking as it was in most of what are now regarded as the essentials of a representative body, it was yet in a sufficiently real sense representative of the aims, opinions, and prejudices of those by whom it was founded. For the nationalism of the

Volunteer movement was not less remarkable than its Protestantism. It has been noted that the Volunteers originated in the necessity for self-defence, and that their functions were at first confined to the protection of the country from a threatened invasion. When, however, that object had been achieved ; when, unaided by the Government, they had shown themselves capable of supplying the place of the Imperial forces, and had thus been taught to rely upon their own energies rather than upon the power of England, they became animated by a new spirit. The sons and brothers of many Ulster men who had crossed the Atlantic in search of commercial freedom were in arms against the authority of Great Britain, and had risen in vindication of rights for whose sake they had submitted to exile. It was inevitable that those who remained behind should catch something of the contagion of resistance to English authority ; and that, possessed of the means of securing the necessary conditions for the full commercial development of Ulster, they should resolve to exact them. Hence the confusion which still prevails as to the real character of the Volunteer movement. It is taken for granted that because the Volunteers were Nationalists they also were cordial supporters of Roman Catholic enfranchisement, and willing to admit their Celtic and Catholic brethren to a complete community of civil privileges. The truth is that a more distinctly self-interested movement has rarely been known in history. Its nationalism was the nationalism of a caste. The aristocratic and land-owning elements concurred in the demand for a free legislature because an independent but unrepresentative Parliament increased their importance without threatening either their privileges or possessions. The mercantile classes supported it because they thought they saw in it a means of procuring commercial advantages which Great Britain had refused to grant. The rank and file of the Protestant tenantry supported it because they were assured of its Protestantism. But not one of these three great bulwarks of the new Irish Constitution was concerned for the interests of the vast majority of the population. Whatever their own grievances

against England, the Volunteers of Ulster were as far from a union of sentiment, affection, or nationality with their Roman Catholic countrymen as their brethren in America were from a like community with the negro population of the States.

But if the Parliament of Ireland and the men who made it were thus militantly Protestant and devotedly Nationalist, how account for the contrast, not merely between the Separatist Ulster of 1797 and the Imperialist Ulster of to-day, but for the rapid change of feeling in a race not prone to sudden emotions which came over the northern province, and which made it possible to destroy in 1800 the Parliament it had been impossible to withhold in 1782? How came it that a section of this ultra-Protestant community were induced to enter into a partnership with their Roman Catholic countrymen and to seek an alliance with republican France for the purpose of upsetting the Constitution they had helped to create? The answer to this latter question is to be found in the action of the ideas of the French Revolution upon the Presbyterians of Ulster.

While the Volunteers were, as has been seen, predominantly Protestant, their Protestantism was by no means uniform in shade or intensity. The leaders at the Convention, and probably a majority of the enfranchised classes, were members of the Established Church; but the great majority both of the tenant-farmers in the counties and of the artisans in the towns of Ulster were Dissenters, and the bulk of them Presbyterians who inherited the political and religious prejudices and opinions of their Covenanting forefathers. These had at that time, as three-quarters of a century later, little respect and no love for the episcopal establishment. Their devotion, too, to monarchical institutions was likely to be sapped by the same circumstance which we have noted as a factor in their clamour for an independent legislature. They were bound by the close ties of family affection and commercial interest to the new republic of the West. The principles of the French Revolution, and even the first acts of its earlier spokesmen, were hailed with



enthusiasm in the North of Ireland. Their successes were applauded and their excesses condoned. The literature of revolutionary and even of infidel opinion was eagerly read in Ulster. In Belfast and its neighbourhood Paine's 'Rights of Man' became so popular that Wolfe Tone in his *Journal* describes it as the Koran of Blefescu (Belfast). Adhesion to such views soon and inevitably involved the northern leaders in admissions which were totally at variance with the cherished Protestantism of the province. It was impossible to assert the equal rights of man, and at the same time to impose an arbitrary restriction upon the professors of an obnoxious creed. For a time, at all events, the influence of this new philosophy and the coercion of logic compelled a profession of toleration. Animated less by sympathy for the Roman Catholics than by devotion to republican principles, the descendants of the Planters allied themselves with their ancient foes to achieve parliamentary reform in the first place, and, in the case of some among them at all events, to found an Irish republic in the second.

It may fairly be doubted, however, whether there was at any period a really considerable party—considerable, that is, in point of numbers—who sincerely desired either of these objects. As for the latter of them, there were doubtless many enthusiasts for liberty, but there were few enthusiasts for revolution. It is worth remarking that as late as 1793, when the Volunteers had been suppressed by proclamation in consequence of the alarms of the Government for the peace of Ulster, a requisition, which bore the signatures of many of the most prominent leaders of the United Irishmen, was sent to the Sovereign (Mayor) of Belfast asking that in vindication of their loyalty the town should be illuminated on the occasion of the King's birthday. As for the former, here are a few items from the toast list at a gathering held in Belfast in February 1788 to celebrate the anniversary of the Revolution:—'The glorious memory of William III.,' 'Lord Charlemont and the Volunteers,' 'The Memory of John Hampden,' 'The Protestant Interest,' 'The Friends of Liberty, Civil and Religious,' 'May the Principles of the



Revolution ever prevail.' Much has been made by popular writers of the inconsistency of Castlereagh, then a very young man, in participating in the toasts which were popular at the Northern Whig Club in 1790, when the aristocracy of Ulster drank to 'The Sovereignty of the People' and 'The Conquerors of the Bastille.'<sup>1</sup> But it is fair to recollect that even in 1792 the toast of 'The French National Assembly' itself was not incompatible with aspirations for the health and prosperity of the King of the French. The most extravagant eulogies upon the children of liberty in France were not, at that time at least, inconsistent with more constitutional declarations in regard to home affairs. The Whig Club cannot of course be represented as a reflex of democratic opinion, but its members were representative of the most advanced constitutional opinion of the day, and it was for a time in the van of the popular movement. It represented the Liberalism of Grattan and Charlemont in Ireland, of Fox in England. It embodied the faith of the Whigs in principles which had not yet reached the disillusion of triumph.

But though the politicians of the Northern Whig Club were probably not very seriously in earnest in their post-prandial dithyrambs about liberty, the character of that association helps to an understanding of the sentiments which were entertained by the majority of the members of a much more serious organisation. For the kid-glove radicalism of the Whig Club glided imperceptibly into the revolutionary republicanism of the United Irish Society. Of the frankly separatist and republican objects which the inner circle of the latter body had before them, there can be, as will be seen in a moment, no sort of question. But it is at least equally certain that the United Irish leaders were conscious from the outset that there would be great difficulty in carrying Ulster opinion with them in their designs, and were obliged to conceal from many of their converts a large part of the inner mysteries of their creed. The necessity for conciliating the Whig Club and the inclusion of many

<sup>1</sup> See the account of Castlereagh's early opinions, *infra*, p. 186.

of its members in the new society gave to the latter, for a time at least, an appearance of moderation which enabled it to secure the adhesion of numbers of Ulster Presbyterians who had no suspicion of its real ends, and who, had they suspected them, would assuredly never have joined it.

While the Protestants of Ulster, though thoroughly in earnest in their eagerness for reform, were distinctly lukewarm in their sympathy for the enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics, it is not less clear that the other party to the union of hearts were very far from caring deeply about parliamentary reform. They wanted Catholic emancipation for its own sake and for its advantages to themselves, but they had no particular anxiety to fall foul of the Government for the sake of effecting modifications in a system which, whether modified or not, seemed certain to remain essentially Protestant. It may well be doubted whether in such circumstances either section would have made any overtures towards an effective union of the two creeds for a common political object, but for the accident which at this moment brought to the surface of politics the restless, imaginative, and dare-devil ambassador of treason, Theobald Wolfe Tone, the founder of the United Irishmen. It is the distinction of that extraordinary personage to have discerned that while it was impossible to establish any real community of interest or affection between the two creeds, each of them might be induced to promote the other's interests for their individual ends. He became the pioneer of log-rolling, and invented a system which would embrace Whigs and Nationalists, Protestants and Catholics, in a common hostility to English rule.

Historians have lamented the fatality, due, however, not less to design than to accident, which has robbed them of much valuable and authentic material for this period of Irish history. And it is unfortunately true that there are deplorable and irreparable gaps in the record. Viceroys, Chief Secretaries, and Chancellors whose correspondence would have thrown a clear light upon many dark passages of the story, and revealed the hidden and not always

explicable motives which guided the policy of the rulers of Ireland, appear either to have kept no papers or to have taken pains to insure their destruction. Lord Clare, the omnipotent and imperious Chancellor, to whom more fully than to any other individual the whole tangled mystery of Castle policy was intelligible, ordered the destruction of every shred of his correspondence. A host of minor officials did the same. The Cornwallis and Castlereagh memoirs are indeed valuable, but they cover only the later history of the rebellion and the passing of the Act of Union. But it is to be observed that, in the main, the lacunæ occur in the case of official correspondence only. The papers of statesmen have perished, but the memoranda of conspiracy survive. If the literature of statecraft is scanty and inadequate, the literature of treason is ample and luxuriant. In the milder years that followed the Union few 'feared to speak of '98' or of the years that went before. The conspirators, on the contrary, underwent an apotheosis. Thus, quite irrespective of the abundant biographies of the constitutional leaders, of Grattan, Charlemont, and their colleagues—not to mention the *ben trovato* narrative of Sir Jonah Barrington—there survive the fullest records of the physical force party of the day. Ere yet the survivors of their generation had departed, the Old Mortality of the United Irishmen, Dr. Richard Madden, gathered together in the work already alluded to the fullest materials for the history of their movement; and we are thus enabled to study their motives and actions in narratives the most favourable to their policy that can be imagined. Nor do we depend solely upon the panegyrics of biographers and hero-worshippers. Many of the United Irishmen wrote in exile their versions of the events with which they had been connected. Keogh, indeed, the most important of the Roman Catholic leaders, is believed to have destroyed all his papers, to the no small loss of historians of Catholic emancipation. But MacNevin and the elder Emmet, Hamilton Rowan, and many others have provided valuable original materials for forming a judgment on their enterprises.

But, above all, this literature is remarkable for one of the most candid and unconventional records of the working of a human brain that ever were penned. The journals of Theobald Wolfe Tone rank among the most fascinating contributions to the most interesting of all forms of biography and history. In it we see the whole machinery of treason at work, and watch the motion of its springs and wheels. Tone indulges in no self-deception about his own motives, and is at no pains to conceal them. He hardly even affects to consider himself a patriot. He hated England much more than he loved Ireland. His was not perhaps a first-rate intellect. But few have brought to the trade of politics a more acute intelligence, and he was possessed of a genius for intrigue which was only equalled by his delight in it. In his diaries he sets down his opinions and designs with startling freedom, and with no less frankness discusses the views, motives, and capacities of his associates. Taken as a whole, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that his journals form as authentic and vivid a piece of history as ever was penned. For it is not, like so many autobiographies, a volume of random recollections. It is a contemporary record by the most active, most trusted, best informed, and most capable member of a great insurrectionary movement of events in which he played a large part, and of the genesis of a conspiracy of which he was himself the chief contriver. His candid avowals absolutely dispose of the fiction, which has nevertheless been often repeated since their publication, that the United Irishmen became a treasonable organisation only when the Government had goaded the people into rebellion. They were indeed goaded into rebellion in the sense that the conspirators were compelled by the premature discovery of their plans to proceed with a half-prepared insurrection. But Tone, though he is eloquent on the hardship of having to fight before he was ready, never affects to deplore the necessity for a rising. The theory that the rebellion was the result of the coercion and cruelty of the Government has no historical foundation, though the ferocity of the

rebels was in some instances unquestionably provoked by the excesses of the soldiery.

Tone must always be remembered as the first of the Fenians, not in name of course, but in spirit and sentiment. Irish Nationalism, ever since that 'ism' first existed, has been of two kinds. There has always been a moderate party, strong mainly in the lower middle classes of Irish society, which has sympathised vaguely with moderate aspirations for a modified form of national independence. There has also been, and probably there always will be, another and a larger body of opinion, which appeals with powerful effect to the sentiment of the masses of the people, which is animated by an unconquerable antipathy to England and the English name. Among modern patriots Tone was the first to appeal to this latter spirit. 'From my earliest youth,' he said, when arraigned before the court-martial in Dublin, 'I have regarded the connection between Ireland and Great Britain as the curse of the Irish nation, and felt convinced that while it lasted this country could never be free or happy. . . . I designed by fair and open war to procure the separation of the two countries.' He sought to found an absolutely independent nation; and seeing that such independence could never be obtained by Irish strength alone, he did not scruple to invoke the aid of a foreign power. From such men as Grattan and Charlemont, Wolfe Tone was as far apart, alike in motive and method, as O'Donovan Rossa from Isaac Butt. He was not, indeed, a man of the people. Few Irish leaders have been. But he understood the material on which he was working, and gauged rightly the true animus of a large section of his fellow-countrymen; and the instinct was a sound one which a few years ago led the organisers of the celebration of the centenary of the Rebellion of 1798 to select Tone as the embodiment of the Separatist movement which culminated in that rising.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The failure of Thomas Davis to complete his study of the United Irishmen in the person of their founder is a loss to history and to literature. For how it is improbable that his biography would have been accepted as a final



It may be doubted, as already observed, whether, but for the appearance at such a moment of the one person in Ireland who, from his official connection with the Roman Catholic committee on the one hand, and his own entirely Protestant antecedents on the other, was capable of winning the unstinted confidence of men of both religions, the mutual suspicions of antagonistic creeds would have permitted an effective alliance between Catholics and Presbyterians. Even with Tone's assistance the community of political interest never developed into a real harmony of sympathy and mutual trust. The forces of religious prejudice proved too strong even for the astute diplomacy of this versatile conspirator. From the very commencement of his operations he found his efforts towards union continually embarrassed by the rooted and inveterate antipathy which the Ulstermen exhibited towards those with whom political necessity seemed to oblige them to make common cause. It is remarkable that when, in 1791, he sent down to the United Irishmen of Belfast three resolutions binding them to the propositions that English influence in Ireland was the great grievance of the country, that the most effectual means of opposing it was a reform of Parliament, and that no reform which did not include the Roman Catholics would suffice, the third proposition was rejected by the local leaders; and he notes with irritation that 'in the party apparently most anxious for reform, it is rather a monopoly than an extension of liberty which is their object.'<sup>1</sup> When, on the part of the Catholic committee to which he was secretary, he met the secret committee which was the nucleus of the United Irish Society of Belfast, he found himself confronted with the same difficulty, and he angrily exclaims in his diary against the prejudices of the principal leaders, one of whom went so far as to suggest that thirty-nine out of every forty Protestants in Ulster estimate, the leader of 'Young Ireland' was much too conscientious a craftsman to distort or suppress the truths of history, while his fine historical imagination would doubtless have enabled him to paint a really vivid picture of his hero.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Wolfe Tone*, i. 140 (Washington edition).



were opposed to the liberation of their Roman Catholic countrymen.

During the whole course of his missionary efforts in the North of Ireland, Tone never completely succeeded in overcoming this obstacle to the success of his plans. There can be no sort of doubt, indeed, that the little coterie of personal friends who figure in his diaries—the coterie who, as early as 1795, were prepared to go all lengths against the authority of England, and who bound themselves on the top of the Cave Hill never to desist from their efforts till they had subverted English rule and obtained the independence of Ireland—were, with their immediate adherents, thoroughly in earnest. But it may well be questioned whether the majority of the Ulster reformers ever sincerely accepted these extreme doctrines, or ever heartily embraced the notion of an equality with the Roman Catholics, notwithstanding that their oath pledged them to ‘a communion of rights and an union of power among Irishmen of all religious persuasions.’ On the contrary, it is evident that this oath was very differently interpreted within the ranks of the society. In January 1792, at a meeting of the Belfast Third Society of United Irishmen, six hundred in number, when it was moved that no reform would be practicable or just which did not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion, two hundred and fifty members dissented, protesting that they understood by the admission of Roman Catholics no more than a gradual enfranchisement, and one not more speedy than ‘the circumstances of the country and the general welfare of the whole kingdom’<sup>1</sup> would permit. The protesting members comprised all those previously most distinguished for patriotic zeal, with very few exceptions. MacNevin himself states that at a celebration of the French Revolution in July 1791 the leaders found it prudent to abandon an intended resolution favouring the admission of Catholics to the franchise, from an apprehension that the minds of those present were not fully prepared for the measure. And in a series of resolutions passed by the

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Collections of the Town of Belfast*, p. 365.

Whig Club declaratory of the needs of the country, the only admission of Roman Catholic rights was one to which their most bigoted opponent could hardly avoid subscribing—viz. ‘that no person ought to suffer civil hardships for his religious persuasion, unless the tenets of his religion lead him to endeavour at the subversion of the State.’

In such a state of feeling it is perhaps more remarkable that a substantial, though temporary, union was brought about between elements so antagonistic and incongruous than that the two parties should have fallen asunder later on. For it speedily became evident that the fusion which the labours of Tone and the enthusiasm of his Belfast friends, Neilson, Russell, and McCracken, had succeeded in bringing about could be utilised for very limited purposes, and could not safely be subjected to any severe strain. And, in point of fact, the enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics in 1793 was really fatal to United Irishism as a constitutional movement. The Ulster theory of the reform of the Constitution was, as Tone noted, a reform of the Protestant Constitution. A mixture of logic and self-interest had compelled the reformers to acquiescence in the admission of the Catholics to the franchise; but they were resolved to go no further. They were fully convinced that the measures of 1792 and 1793 represented the extreme limits of legitimate concession consistent with the preservation of the Protestant ascendancy. No sooner did it appear that the Catholics and their friends intended to press for further privileges, including admission to Parliament and eligibility for the great offices of the State, than the principles of the glorious Revolution began to reassert themselves. They fell back on the excellences of the Constitution which they owed to the patriotism of the Volunteers, and they carefully limited their aspirations for reform to a measure for enlarging the representation of commercial Ulster which would add to their own political consequence.

Deserted, therefore, by the armchair politicians of the Northern Whig Club, their Catholic allies being discountenanced by the secession of the Catholic aristocracy, who

declared themselves satisfied with the concessions of 1793, and discouraged by the shopkeeping prudence of Keogh, the little knot of revolutionary politicians who led the extreme faction in Belfast were hurried by the violence of their principles into that alliance with the lower orders of the Roman Catholic population which was the chief cause of their ultimate failure. They forgot to reckon with the inherent Protestantism of Ulster, and the instinctive loyalty of the province to the unity of the three kingdoms. The secrecy and mystery, evidently designed to aggravate the general alarm, which the United Irishmen began to affect were resented by the majority of their adherents in the North. The imitation of republican principles and language, strikingly evidenced by an alteration in the oath or test of the United Irishmen, which indicated the subversion of the Constitution rather than the reform of Parliament as the final goal of their ambition, contributed to alienate many more. Sentiments which might have been safely avowed, and even applauded, in 1790, met with a very different reception when the execution of Louis XVI. and his queen and the Reign of Terror had shown to what lengths revolutionary principles might be pushed by the subjects of His Most Catholic Majesty. And when the prosecution of Catholic emancipation, as a measure quite separate from parliamentary reform, was made a distinct object of the society, the revulsion of feeling made itself felt in the declarations of the moderate reformers. The latter began to examine the history of the British Constitution, and suddenly discovered that all the virtues of liberty, all the objects for which they as Ulstermen had striven, were inherent therein. They began to reflect that if United Irish principles were to be pushed to their logical conclusions, they would become an inconsiderable minority in a Catholic and independent Ireland, which was not likely long to be bound by Tone's suggested check for Roman Catholic intolerance—a franchise of ten-pound freeholders. They exchanged prayers for the French arms for declarations of loyalty, and they made a formal protest against the charge made in the report of the Lords' Com-

mittee that they had, in the presence of military associations, prayed for the success of the French arms, averring that from the date of the French declaration of war they had abstained from the practice.

Such a revolution of opinion and language on the part of those to whom they were accustomed to look up for guidance soon had its natural effect upon the populace of Belfast and its neighbourhood. And when the extremists, passing from violent language to violent action, adopted a military organisation and enrolled the Belfast Regiment of National Volunteers, the revulsion of feeling became intensified. Two circumstances only were wanting to complete the transformation, and these were soon supplied. The threat of French invasion, and the terror created by the armed organisation of the Catholic population under the name of 'Defenders,' quickly dissipated whatever still remained of the short-lived enthusiasm of the Protestant colony of the Plantation for the Catholic cause. In December 1796 the terrors of a French invasion were averted by the elements, but not before the dread of it had roused the North to an active loyalty. Far from rallying to the cause of treason, the Ulstermen, despite the dissuasion of O'Connor, Sampson, and other United Irish leaders, insisted on adopting active measures for the defence of the country. A corps of Volunteers was quickly enrolled, and, to the chagrin of the conspirators, was joined by many whose previous actions had seemed to indicate a readiness for revolution.

Whilst Ulster patriotism was thus stimulated by the menace of a foreign foe, Ulster Protestantism was angered by the atrocities of the Rebellion. In the long-drawn-out agony of that piecemeal insurrection, the United Irish in Ulster were crushed before they well had time to rise, and the fire had been extinguished north of the Boyne ere it broke out in the South. A subdued and only partially disaffected Ulster thus had leisure to contemplate the progress of disorder in Wicklow, Wexford, and elsewhere. The ex-United Irishmen of Antrim and Down derived considerable edifica-

tion from the mode in which their Roman Catholic brethren in Wicklow and Kildare observed the solemn obligation enjoined in their oath, 'to promote a brotherhood of affection and an identity of interest among their brethren of all religious persuasions.' The devoted adherents of the Whig Constitution—the men who a few short years before had pledged the glorious memory of William III., and 'the cause for which Hampden died upon the field and Sidney on the scaffold'—found themselves, to their dismayed astonishment, partners in a Roman Catholic crusade. They read of the priests of a religion they could with difficulty tolerate leading the rebel army in Wexford, and making the Mass the preface to a massacre. Startled by the prospect of a religious war, the Protestants of the North, Episcopalians and Dissenters alike, went over in crowds from the United Irish to the loyal, and what now began to be known as the Orange, camp. Not the moderates only, but the conspirators themselves, felt the influence of the reaction, and recognised the radical inconsistency between their aims and their actions. At the edge of the precipice, in the very act of falling over it, their eyes were opened to the true aims of those with whom they had allied themselves. Shortly before his execution for participating in the battle of Antrim, James Dickey, one of the Presbyterian leaders, declared that if he and his friends had succeeded in their designs they would have had to contend ultimately with their Roman Catholic allies.

While these influences were at work, it fell out by a curious chance that at the very moment when the excesses of their allies were beginning to alarm the leaders of the United Irishmen, and even to lead them to consider the possibility of remodelling their society upon a Protestant basis, the accidental and local difficulties of one of the Ulster counties had provided the startled Ulstermen with the model of a defensive organisation. Few circumstances in Irish history are more remarkable than the rapid growth of Orangeism, and few perhaps have been more often and more persistently misrepresented or more generally mis-



understood. In connection with recent controversies it has become the subject of a theory, according to which the Orange institution was a device of the landlord and aristocratic party to carry the Protestant populace with them in support of a Union by an appeal to their religious bigotry. Nothing can well be more remote from the reality, as is shown plainly enough by the single fact that the Orange body was deeply divided on the Act of Union, its leading men taking opposite sides; and the notion is one which only total ignorance of the somewhat obscure origin of Orangeism can at all excuse. It would be much nearer the mark to say, on the contrary, that the Orange organisation was the first movement of essentially democratic origin which was witnessed in Ireland.

Though the first Orange lodge was not formed till the year 1795, the associations of Protestant farmers in which Orangeism originated were at least ten years older, and date in fact from the disbanding of the Volunteers, of whom, in a sense at least as real as the relationship of the United Irishmen, the Orangemen were the direct descendants.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is curious that a century after its birth Orangeism should still remain without an historian and that it should only be possible to trace its far from uninteresting or uneventful history either in stray articles in half-forgotten magazines or in the even less attractive pages of Parliamentary bluebooks. And it is still more curious that of the few accounts which have been given of the institution by far the most complete came from the pen of the founder of the Home Rule party. Just sixty years ago, the late Mr. Isaac Butt, then a rising young Conservative barrister, contributed to the pages of the *Dublin University Magazine* an article entitled 'What is an Orangeman?' which contains the best definition of the objects of the institution, and the most succinct account of the circumstances in which it originated, which has yet been penned. A year or two later, the Rev. Mortimer O'Sullivan, a once celebrated Protestant controversialist, contributed to the same periodical, as part of a series of articles called 'Byways of Irish History,' the account of the Battle of the Diamond, which is referred to in the text. A Parliamentary inquiry in 1823, and again in 1835, elicited much information about the movement in the nineteenth century, but already at that date the number of persons who could speak of its foundation was very small. The fullest and most complete account is buried, unpublished, in the files of the *Belfast Newsletter* in a series of papers by Mr. Richard Lilburne, and perhaps the handiest account now available is a little pamphlet by the late Mr. Edward Rogers, Grand Secretary of Armagh, called *The Revolution of 1688 and the History of the Orange Association*, but this unfortunately contains more about the Revolution than about Orangeism



Nothing is more remarkable or more creditable in the history of the Irish Volunteers than the respect for law and order which they exhibited throughout the period of their influence and power. Their great achievements were unstained by a single outrage, and so far from being—in their earlier career, at all events—obnoxious to the law, they became its guardians. In the later years of the organisation, however, when the great and dignified objects for which they had been called into existence had been accomplished, their discipline was relaxed. Although retaining their formal organisation down to 1792, in which year the last of the Volunteer celebrations round the statue of William III. was held, they may be said to have ceased to exist as a political force after the abortive Convention of 1783. No longer held together by leaders of station and influence, the rank and file of the Volunteers became a source of aggression in certain districts of the country, and in one county kindled the flame of agrarian and religious discord to a point which threatened a serious political conflagration.

It was in the year 1784, and in the county of Armagh, that the roving banditti, called the Peep of Day Boys, were first heard of. The Peep of Day Boys were disbanded Volunteers, who, sharing the convictions of their old leader, Charlemont, as to the risk of entrusting arms to the Catholic population, formed themselves into marauding parties, visiting the houses of their Catholic neighbours before daybreak with the object of depriving them of arms. These attacks, and the outrages by which they were sometimes accompanied, were by no means tamely submitted to, and soon called into existence the organisation, afterwards widely known as Defenders, which was formed in the first instance for the mutual protection of the Catholic tenantry against the attacks of their assailants. These Defenders,

properly so called. A few years ago the centenary of the institution led to some investigation on the subject, and in the *Contemporary Review* for August 1896 appeared an interesting article on the organisation by Mr. Michael Macdonagh, which contains much valuable information.

in their later and more questionable history, owed much to the felicity of the pacific title which they thus assumed. For, though formed for purposes scarcely illegitimate, and, at any rate, having endured very considerable provocation, they did not very long adhere to the defensive operations which their name implies. When, some ten years subsequent to their formation, the violent conflicts between Peep of Day Boys and Defenders culminated in the famous Battle of the Diamond, this peaceful appellation stood them in good stead. Historians have hesitated to admit the paradox that Defenders could be the attacking party, and the Peep of Day Boys have been visited with the sole blame of these feuds even after they had changed places with their adversaries and assumed the defensive position themselves.

The standing animosities of Protestant and Catholic had broken out intermittently in Armagh from 1784 to 1795, and occasional eruptions had shown that the ever-smouldering volcano of religious discord was not completely at rest. In 1795, however, it burst into fierce action, and its ravages on this occasion appear to have been aggravated by the accidental coincidence of agrarian with religious interests. The concession of the franchise to the Roman Catholics in 1793 had produced in those parts of the country where Protestants and Catholics were not very unevenly divided a curious result, which no one probably had anticipated, but which in a country like Ireland was certainly very unfortunate. Prior to that measure Irish landowners, with the object of strengthening their political influence, were in the habit of giving a preference to Protestant tenants, in order to command their votes. When, however, the Act of 1793, by giving Roman Catholics a voice in elections, made the religion of his tenantry immaterial to the landlord, who had expected in any event, as down to the Waterford election of 1823 he always did, to control their votes,<sup>1</sup> a change took place which was much resented by the

<sup>1</sup> After the Enfranchising Act of 1793 the 'forty-shilling freeholder' was multiplied in large numbers in the Irish counties, the landlords counting upon implicitly and, down to the Waterford and Clare elections, uniformly receiving

Protestant farmers. Deprived of the advantages of his political monopoly, the thrifty and cautious Presbyterian found himself outbid in the competition for vacant farms by the uncalculating land-hunger of the Catholic Celt. The land-owners gave the preference to the highest bidder, irrespective of religion, and the disgust of the disappointed Protestants, their hereditary hatred aggravated by the sight of their Roman Catholic neighbours entering into what they had grown to regard as the heritage of a chosen people, broke out into fury. It is said that an attempt was even made to organise a crusade for the expulsion of the new tenants. It is certain, at all events, that the latter soon found themselves served with threatening notices, which bade them go, in the language of Cromwell, 'to hell or Connaught'—a sentence which was in some cases enforced by serious outrage. The whole country speedily took fire, and the ranks of Peep of Day Boys and Defenders were swelled by immense numbers of recruits. In the heat of sectarian strife the agrarian *casus belli* was forgotten; the quarrel was embraced on either side by numbers of persons entirely unconnected with the land; and the whole North threatened to resolve itself into opposing religious camps. By the middle of 1795 the Defenders' organisation had spread from Ulster to Leinster and Connaught, and its active spirits had determined on making effective reprisals on their original assailants. During the whole summer the county of Armagh remained in a state of constant turbulence, which culminated in September in a pitched battle at the Diamond, a village near Portadown. It is interesting to recall the circumstances in which this once celebrated encounter originated.

The long-standing animosities of Peep of Day Boys and Defenders had been much aggravated by the active propa-

the votes of their tenants. It was the revolt of these freeholders in Waterford and Clare that carried Catholic Emancipation, and Sir Robert Peel accompanied his Emancipation Act with a measure disfranchising these freeholders and substituting a 10% franchise, a franchise which, as noted above, Wolfe Tone had suggested as a security to the land-owning claims against confiscatory legislation.

ganda of the United Irishmen of Armagh. Emissaries were mischievously busy in inflaming the animosities of the people and disseminating treasonable principles among them. Political and religious feeling reached a high pitch of intensity. Fairs and funerals, weddings and wakes supplied arenas in which the country people engaged in acrimonious discussion of inflammatory topics—discussions which often terminated in bloodshed. As the summer went by the state of things became progressively worse, and armed bands paraded the countryside. In July the first serious encounter took place at the fair of Loughgall, when the Protestant party were driven out of the town by the Defenders. From that time till September 21 the two parties remained watching each other, and the county was in the hands of two rival mobs. Numerous isolated outrages took place, and the magistracy was powerless to check the spread of disorder. The Defenders and Peep of Day Boys were equally active, and in the eye of the law equally culpable, and equally fierce in religious zeal and intolerance. At length, about the middle of September, it was discovered by the inhabitants of the Protestant village of the Diamond, situated about four miles from Portadown, that the Defenders had encamped in large numbers in their immediate vicinity at a place called Annaghmore, where they constructed a rude fortification and from which they sallied out from time to time to commit depredations on their Protestant neighbours. The Peep of Day Boys from the surrounding district were at once assembled, and for two days and nights a species of skirmishing was kept up by the two factions, both of which were well supplied with firearms. On the third day, however, and before any very serious damage had been inflicted by either party, the influence of a neighbouring squire, Mr. Atkinson, of Crowhill, on the one side, and of a Roman Catholic priest, Father Traynor, on the other, effected a truce between the two parties. A conference was held at the house of one Daniel Winter in the Diamond, and a treaty of peace entered into; Mr. Atkinson and Father Traynor binding themselves as sureties in a penalty of 50*l*.

each for the future preservation of the peace by their respective parties. The truce was proclaimed, and the two parties had begun to disperse, when unhappily the arrival of a large force of Defenders who had been summoned from Keady, at the western end of the county, to the aid of their friends at the Diamond, and who were ignorant of the treaty of peace, led to a renewal of the encounter and produced the much more serious encounter which has become historical as the Battle of the Diamond.

These extraordinary proceedings were watched with mingled feelings by the Government on the one hand and by the insurrectionary leaders on the other. To the latter they were the source of serious disquietude, as threatening to destroy the harmony of that co-operation between the two creeds which they had so energetically laboured to bring about. The United Irish leaders had the sagacity to see how injuriously their cause was affected by this demonstration of the radical opposition between the two parties whose co-operation was essential to the triumph of their designs, and in Tone's correspondence we find Armagh spoken of with irritation as 'having always been a plague to us.' Two of the most important members of the organisation were despatched to the scene of the disturbances. In vain they used their best efforts to compose these unfortunate dissensions. The hostility of race and religion proved stronger than all other arguments, and the angry feelings engendered by the blood spilt at the Diamond made reconciliation impossible. On the morrow of that affair, September 22, 1795, the first Orange lodge was formed in the house of a farmer named Sloan.<sup>1</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> The precise circumstances which caused the men who fought at the Diamond to adopt or receive the name of Orangemen remains and probably must continue unknown. But that it was given to them very early is certain. Mr. Jephson, a member of the Irish Parliament, writing to Lord Charlemont from Loughgall, in the county Armagh, on October 9, 1795, thus refers to them: 'As I happen to find myself in the centre of the northern disturbances, it occurs to me that your lordship may be glad to hear some account of the state of the country from a person on the spot. I find that the old quarrel between the Peep of Day Boys and the Defenders has come to an alarming height indeed and though there is at present a temporary suspension of hostilities,



was in its first intention apparently designed as a purely defensive precaution for the mutual protection of the farmers of the district, to the neighbourhood of which the organisation was at first confined. But the Defenders having formed themselves in formidable numbers in the adjacent counties, the example of the Armagh Orangemen was quickly followed in Down, Antrim, and other northern counties. By the middle of 1797 the United Irish Society, which had recruited its forces so extensively and so exclusively from the ranks of the Defenders that it had become an essentially Roman Catholic body, had been so entirely discredited with many of its original supporters, and had induced so much suspicion and alarm among the Protestant party, that the latter, unable in such troubled and excited times to preserve a neutral position, even if they had wished it, became active supporters of the Orange body. The day dream of a United Ireland had become a nightmare, and the evanescent union which had threatened to give reality to the United Irish movement was at an end.

Another circumstance which greatly assisted the rapid propagation of Orange principles was the influence of the numerous bodies of Yeomanry which between 1796 and 1798 were formed for the purpose of resisting invasion. It is a yet the public men of the country, as far as I can collect from their conversation, live in daily dread of a renewal of the same commotions. In the meantime the outrages that have passed have left some of their worst effects behind them—a deadly irreconcilable rancour in the minds of the lower people, and such a dread of violence as induces the better sort of people to desert their houses. It is impossible for the Protestant gentry to keep up the face of impartiality between the parties, or to disavow the absolute necessity of giving a considerable degree of support to the Protestant party, who from the activity of the two Copes have got the name of the Orange Boys. Indeed, the preservation of the country from the most dreadful consequences is attributed by some to a very seasonable victory gained by a small number of their people over 400 of the Defenders, whom they met returning from a part of Mr. Cope's estate, laden with plunder of all sorts and kinds. In this battle sixteen of the Defenders were killed. I do not hear that any of the gentry have met with any mischief; and my brother William told me that he rode through 300 well-armed Orange Boys in the middle of the night, who wished him safe home, and did him no kind of injury.'—*Correspondence of Lord Charlemont: Report of Hist. MSS. Comm.* It does not appear what was the connection between the Copes and the name Orange; but possibly they were members of the Masonic 'Orange' Lodge already referred to.

curious coincidence that the Yeomanry movement had its origin in the very district in which Orangeism was founded, namely, the borders of Armagh and Tyrone ; that the persons instrumental in raising the first Yeomanry regiments were the same who were the first to countenance and connect themselves with the Orangemen ; and that the rank and file of these regiments were recruited mainly from the members of the Orange lodges in the neighbourhood. As the disturbed state of the country necessitated the despatch of these regiments from one part of Ireland to another, the Orange principles with which they were imbued quickly spread throughout Ireland, and led to the formation of Orange lodges in the south and west. It was, however, in Ulster that they took quickest hold. In 1796 the first Twelfth of July celebrations were held in Armagh and Portadown, and in the year following in Belfast ; while in 1798, on the eve of the Rebellion, the organisation spread to Dublin, Grand Lodge being instituted there on April 9.

For more than a generation it became impossible to revive in any part of Ireland the ideals of the men of '98. It has never become possible to revive them in Ulster. Long before the Rebellion broke out the United Irish movement had ceased to be formidable in the district where it had originated, and from which it derived its importance as a menace to English rule. In the town of Belfast itself not a finger was raised, and though Henry Joy MacCracken and two or three more of the Protestant leaders persisted in forcing their way through the fields of Antrim and Ballinahinch to the unhappy fate that awaited them, the men on whom Tone and his comrades had relied for success refused to fire a shot in a struggle from which they foresaw that even if they emerged triumphantly they would be called on to surrender their cherished sympathies, alike religious and political, in favour of the hereditary enemies of both. Though the Union was by no means hailed with enthusiasm in the North of Ireland, it is remarkable how quickly even prominent United Irishmen became reconciled to it. After the insurrection of Robert Emmet and Russell a numerous

meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast expressed 'their horror at the nefarious attempt to disturb the peace of Ireland,' and leave was obtained to raise two corps of Volunteers, in whose ranks were conspicuous many of the men who had figured as active agitators prior to 1793. In a few years the Protestants of Ulster had become, in the language of one of the original reformers, 'convinced of the necessity of an incorporation of the two kingdoms, which by delivering them from a dependent independence had removed the danger of a rupture between them.' And even so thorough a United Irishman as Dr. Drennan, the Tyrtæus of the insurrectionary army, declared in 1817 that a full, free, and frequent representation of the people in Parliament would reconcile him to the Union.<sup>1</sup>

It is curious, as suggesting the rooted and irreconcilable aversion of Irishmen to English rule, to reflect that of the grievances in which the Rebellion originated not one now remains. The Statute Book of the United Kingdom has been purged of every civil and commercial disability of which United Irishmen of Ulster complained, and of more than all the inequalities against which Irish Catholics in 1798 ever thought of protesting. In his valuable work entitled 'Fifty Years of Concessions to Ireland,' Mr. Barry O'Brien has enumerated the various disabilities under which, in respect of the agrarian, the religious, the educational, the parliamentary, the poor-law, and the municipal systems, one class or another in Ireland has from time to time, during the last half-century, believed itself to labour. Some of these have not yet, indeed, been finally settled; but this at any rate is certain, that not one among the questions which now agitate Ireland dates back to the period of the Rebellion, nor does a single item in the programme of the United Irishmen remain unaccomplished, with the sole exception of separation. The speeches and writings of the men of '98 may be searched in vain for the statement of a single wrong that has been suffered to remain unremedied. If it is alleged that the failure to conciliate Ireland is due not so much

<sup>1</sup> *Belfast Historical Collections*, Preface, p. xv.

to the lack of healing measures as to the delay which has occurred in passing them, or to the ungracious and reluctant manner in which they have been conceded, may it not fairly be enquired to what is due the conversion of the once rebel north to ardent loyalty to the connection? No legislative distinctions have been made between the treatment of Ulster and that of the rest of Ireland. If the descendants of the men who drank to the memory of Orr and fought upon the field of Antrim and Ballinahinch are now, like the descendants of the Protestant United Irishmen of Dublin and the south, warmly attached to the connection with Great Britain, while the descendants of the Celtic and Catholic elements in the Irish Union remain inveterately opposed to that connection, the difference can only be accounted for by that racial antagonism whose fires have survived for seven centuries and are unhappily still unextinguished.

It is a matter of some importance that the continuity of Ulster sentiment—of Ulster prejudice, if the phrase be preferred—should be understood; and that the misapprehension founded upon an inconsistency of political conduct which is much more apparent than real should be corrected. Other causes besides those already referred to have no doubt contributed to strengthen the attachment of Ulster to the Union; but the considerations here indicated have unquestionably been the dominant factors in producing that enthusiasm for the British connection which is now the characteristic of North-Eastern Ireland. Even those most convinced of the soundness and justice of the principles on which Ulster Unionism rests must be far from expressing sympathy with their every development. But the student or the statesman who seeks to apply the lessons of history to the empirical science of politics will err gravely if he thinks that what he is unable to sympathise with is not worth comprehending. No sensible man, no statesman of sagacity, and certainly no true lover of Ireland, however strenuous his opinions, can possibly deem it for the advantage of the country that the distinctions of race and creed and party should be so broad and deep as they unfortunately

are and have been, nor should anything be spoken or written which implies approval of ancient dissensions or tends to fan to fresh vigour flames which happily, if not yet dying, are at least less furious than of yore. But scarcely less disservice is done to the true interests of Ireland and the Empire by misreading the facts of history, and by a too facile acceptance of pleasant and convenient theories. No one is entitled to theorise about Ireland until he has made some progress towards understanding Ulster.



## II

*THE EARL-BISHOP OF DERRY*

THE part played for a brief season in the Irish politics of his day by that Earl of Bristol who united with his temporal dignity in the kingdom of Great Britain the rank of a spiritual peer in the kingdom of Ireland, as Bishop of Derry, is familiar to all students of the troubled period of Irish history which marked the earlier years of Irish legislative independence. In connection with the part played by Lord Bristol in the volunteer movement Froude has drawn in a few graphic touches the portrait of 'the most singular representative of the class of bishops who had been chosen to preside over the spiritual destinies of the Irish people,' who, 'rather from love of excitement and vanity than from personal interest in Ireland, assumed the character of a war-like prelate of the Middle Ages.'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lecky has painted the same picture with more detail, and with a more serious attempt to understand the inconsistencies of a character which, though notorious in the Bishop's later years for a degree of licence and libertinism which scandalised even a scandalous age, was yet able to win the approbation of Wesley by the exemplary discharge of episcopal duty, and to earn the encomiums of the philosopher Bentham by the display of intelligence, learning, and personal charm. But even the patience of Mr. Lecky owns defeat in the attempt to ascertain 'whether any real change had passed over the character and opinions of the Bishop, which might help to explain the strange want of keeping between the different descriptions or periods of his life.'<sup>2</sup> Upon this problem, as well as upon the general story of Lord Bristol's career,

<sup>1</sup> *The English in Ireland*, Cabinet edition, ii. 413.

<sup>2</sup> *England in the Eighteenth Century*, vi. 334.

a little light is thrown by the letters from and to Lord Bristol contained in the correspondence of his daughter Elizabeth, Duchess of Devonshire, better known as Lady Elizabeth Foster, a lady whose remarkable gifts and graces shared with those of Madame Neckar the distinction of having seduced from his resolution of celibacy the cold egotism of the historian of Rome. To the revelation of character afforded by these letters, which range over a space of two-and-twenty years, and by those addressed to Sir William Hamilton, which have been privately printed by Mr. Alfred Morrison, some passages in the autobiography of Arthur Young add the estimate of a keen observer, who, as a near neighbour in Suffolk, was on terms of intimacy with Lord Bristol. Joined to the materials already existing elsewhere, of which the fullest and most important are the manuscript authorities and letters in the library of the British Museum, and to the results of a careful endeavour to collect such memories of the Bishop as yet remain in his Irish diocese, the correspondence published by Mr. Vere Foster in *The Two Duchesses* aids us largely, if not to the complete solution of Mr. Lecky's problem, at any rate to an understanding of that dual nature which made it possible for Lord Bristol to merit equally the maledictions of Charlemont and Horace Walpole, the friendship of Shelburne, and the encomiums of acquaintances so dissimilar as Wesley, Bentham, and Arthur Young.

Few characters in English or Irish history present a stranger medley of incongruous opposites than that of Frederick Hervey, Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry. Combining high rank in the English aristocracy and a splendid estate with the wealthiest of Irish bishoprics, and uniting to the manners of a *grand seigneur* a devotion to art which would have done no discredit to a Medici, the fourth Earl of Bristol resembled rather a prince-bishop of the Middle Ages than an English nobleman or an eighteenth-century divine. Yet, with political talents that would have sufficed to sustain the rôle of a great ecclesiastical statesman he combined extravagances of speech and action which

rendered co-operation with him impossible, and reduced to the level of pure Quixotism an adventure in Hibernian politics which, ballasted by good sense and dignified by the most ordinary decorum, might have exercised a useful and liberalising, instead of a disturbing and injurious influence on the course of Irish history. With tastes for painting, sculpture, and architecture as remarkable as his means of gratifying them were splendid, he joined, especially in his later years, a looseness of morals which, however venial the fashion of the day may have deemed it in a layman, was unpardonable in the wearer of a mitre; and the shamelessness with which he flaunted in the eighteenth century a profligacy which would have disgraced the worst examples of the fifteenth betokened a Borgia rather than a Wolsey.

The chameleon-like personality which united these extraordinary contradictions and inconsistencies was the offspring of parents scarcely less remarkable than himself. John, Lord Hervey, eldest son of the first Earl of Bristol, who, in Walpole's Administration, first as the occupant of a Court office in the *entourage* of Queen Caroline and afterwards as Lord Privy Seal, exercised a direct and sometimes commanding influence on the opinions and policy of George II., was among the most notable Englishmen of his day, and one of the most eminent figures in the Court of which he has left so unflattering a picture. He had the misfortune to earn the malevolent enmity of Pope; and the pen of the satirist was never dipped more deep in gall than when, smarting under personalities which exaggerated his normal spitefulness to the dignity of a fiercer passion, the poet drew that savage portrait of 'Sporus,' which no one who has read it can forget.<sup>1</sup> The last couplet of Pope's tirade was, perhaps justified by the curious effeminacy, characteristic of

<sup>1</sup> 'Sporus! that mere white curd of asses' milk,  
His wit all seesaw between *that* and *this*,  
And he himself one vile antithesis.  
Amphibious thing! that acting either part,  
The trifling head or the corrupted heart,  
Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,  
Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord.'

the mental qualities, as well as the physical features, of Lord Hervey, which prompted the epigram of his friend and correspondent Lady Mary Montagu (sometimes ascribed to Chesterfield) that 'at the beginning God created men, women, and Herveys.' But the jibes at Lord Hervey's understanding were altogether inapplicable to one of the most capable politicians, shrewdest observers, and most caustic writers of his time; and the author of the 'Secret Memoirs of the Court of George II.' has had intellectually an abundant, though posthumous, revenge for the oblique slanders of the 'Epistle to Arbuthnot' and the 'Imitations of Horace,' and the direct insults of the celebrated 'Letter to a Noble Lord.'

The brothers of this remarkable person were likewise distinguished by talents which were, however, accompanied by considerable eccentricity and a deplorable laxity of morals. A younger brother, Henry, who, marrying the heiress of Sir Thomas Aston, became the ancestor, through his daughter, of the Irish family of Bruce, whom the Bishop of Derry made the heirs of his Irish property, won, by his careless kindness, despite great vices, the grateful epitaph of Johnson, 'Call a dog Hervey, and I will love him;' while an elder brother, Carr, Lord Hervey, who is suspected, on evidence more positive than the close resemblance of personal and mental characteristics which corroborates it, of having been the parent of Horace Walpole, occupies a prominent place in the memoirs of his time.

Much as Lord Hervey occupied the attention of eminent contemporaries, his lady was no less an object of interest, though in her case criticism took the happier form of compliment. The universal testimony of a host of admiring contemporaries has left Mary, Lady Hervey, in no need of the posthumous evidences of her charm and vivacity which survive in her published letters. In early youth Mary Lepel, the fair maid of honour to the Princess of Wales, divided with Miss Mary Bellenden (afterwards Duchess of Argyll) the homage of the courtiers of St. James's and the toasts of the wits of White's; and Lady Hervey preserved in middle and even to old age the qualities which gave distinction to

her beauty. Even at a time when it was the fashion to celebrate in verse the charms of Court beauties not many could boast of tributes from both Pope and Gay. The author of the 'Beggars' Opera' celebrates the graces of the handsomest pair at Court in the couplet—

Now, Hervey, fair of face, I mark full well  
With thee, youth's youngest daughter, sweet Lepel ;

and not all the malignity of Pope's enmity to her husband could provoke him to disparage a lady for whom at one time the poet seems to have entertained a sincere affection. The fury of his 'Letter to a Noble Lord' is relieved by the parenthesis in which 'the beauty, merit, and vivacity' of Lady Hervey exempt her from the denunciations showered on her spouse. Chesterfield's mature testimony to the charms of mind and manner possessed in her fiftieth year by a lady whose maiden beauty he had, with Pulteney, celebrated in a ballad, best enables posterity to understand the sources of a fascination which inspired Voltaire to the only set of English verses which he is known to have written.<sup>1</sup>

She has been bred all her life at Courts, of which she has acquired all the easy good breeding and politeness without the frivolousness. She has all the reading that a woman should have, and more than a woman need have; for she understands Latin perfectly well, and wisely conceals it. No woman ever had more than she has *le ton de la parfaitement bonne compagnie, les manières engageantes et le je ne sais quoi qui plaît*.<sup>2</sup>

From Lady Hervey her son, the Bishop, appears to have derived the two characteristics which had the strongest

<sup>1</sup> 'Hervey, would you know the passion  
You have kindled in my breast,  
Trifling is the inclination  
That by words can be expressed.

'In my silence see the lover—  
True love is by silence known—  
In my eyes you'll best discover  
All the powers of your own.'

<sup>2</sup> *Chesterfield's Letters*, ii. 40.



influence on his career—viz. his love of Continental life and that *penchant* for Roman Catholicism which so shocked his contemporaries, and which, to say truth, sat somewhat strangely on a bishop of the Establishment half a century before Catholic emancipation. Miss Lepel was of French extraction, and of her latter years many were spent abroad. Cole, the antiquary, states that she lived so long at Paris, after her husband's death, that it got to the ears of George II. that her Ladyship was not only turned Jacobite, but also Roman Catholic; but adds that, when he mentioned it to her son Frederick (the Bishop), the latter part of the story was denied. Her letters, published in 1822, to Rev. Edmund Morris, who acted as tutor to her sons, show that she took a keen interest in theological questions, and a passage, written in 1749, apropos of Conyers Middleton's once celebrated 'Inquiry as to the Miraculous Powers of the Church,' reads curiously like a comment on the Tractarian controversy of a century later.<sup>1</sup>

The offspring of this union of talent and originality with

<sup>1</sup> 'One thing only seems pretty evident to me, which is that the Fathers and the Protestants can hardly be supported together. All those things which we call superstitions and innovations of the Roman Catholics were undoubtedly the practice of the primitive Christians; and though I believe the Papal power was an innovation, yet their ceremonies and faith were to my apprehension not so. Therefore I must stick to my old opinion that the Reformation as managed by Henry VIII. was warrantable according to Christianity; but that introduced by Luther and Calvin, and adopted by Edward VI., was not quite so clearly founded in authority.'

Of Lady Hervey's acuteness as a critic of character her estimate of Charles Townshend, written on hearing the news of the death of that splendid failure, is a striking proof, and its closing sentences curiously anticipate the similar language used by Edmund Burke in one of the most gorgeous passages in his speeches. 'One of the brightest stars in our hemisphere is set. Mr. Townshend will be missed as a speaker in the House of Commons, and as an inexhaustible fund of entertainment in all companies; but no party or set of men will want him, because none ever knew when they had him. When I was told of his death I could hardly forbear saying "Alas! poor Yorick. Where be now your gibes? Your flashes of entertainment that set the table in a roar?" 'Twas only in that light I could think of him. Great is the difference between his real death and the political demise of Lord Chatham. Certain companies at certain times will regret the one; but a nation suffers in the loss of the other. Mr. Townshend was a shining, sparkling star; Lord Chatham an invigorating vivifying sun; we miss the one, but can hardly subsist without the other.'

beauty and charm inherited no small share of the attributes of their progenitors, and as three out of four sons successively inherited one of the wealthiest of English earldoms the excellences and eccentricities of this generation of Herveys could not fail to attract as much attention from their contemporaries as an earlier age had bestowed on their parents. What Pope and Chesterfield did for Lord Hervey and Molly Lepel Horace Walpole and his brother gossips have done for their children; and, while the diplomatic, naval, and ecclesiastical history of Great Britain attests the intellectual vigour of the second, third, and fourth Earls of Bristol, the pens of the scandal-mongers of the age found frequent exercise in recounting the astonishing doings of George, Augustus, and Frederick Hervey. A fourth brother, who, though designed for the Church, ended his career as a general in the army, displaying the qualities of his race in less marked fashion, and on a less eminent stage, has hitherto appeared to have escaped the stings of the gossips of the eighteenth century; but the character drawn of him by Arthur Young, in his lately published 'Autobiography,' proves William Hervey to have been no exception to the rest of his name in point of eccentricity.

Of the early years of the future bishop, who was born on August 1, 1730, but few authentic details are available. Lord Hervey, though called to the House of Peers in his father's lifetime, died before the first Earl of Bristol, in 1743, and the care of the children devolved on Lady Hervey, aided by the counsel and assistance of their grandfather, an amiable and accomplished nobleman, to whom, as appears from his letters, published by Mr. Sydenham Hervey, Frederick seems to have been an object of peculiar interest and affection. Young Hervey, with his younger brother William, was educated partly at Westminster School and partly under the tutelage of Mr. Morris, a Hampshire rector, already mentioned as the correspondent of Lady Hervey, whose letters he edited.

The letters of Mr. Morris to his mother—who, however, in after years, according to Horace Walpole, 'did not highly reverence her son's sincerity,' and rarely had him

at her house—were such as justified in Lady Hervey high hopes for the future of her son, and his progress at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, whither he went in 1747, confirmed this favourable augury. Cole, the Cambridge antiquary, who knew Hervey well, states that his application to study was as remarkable as it was unusual in persons of his rank ; and his grandfather's letters show that the delight in travel and love of art which always marked the Bishop were developed early. The young student consults his grandfather as to the purchase of a reputed Vandyke portrait of the old Earl's mother, and discusses schemes of foreign travel with his tutor and Lady Hervey. It was at Cambridge, too, that the future Bishop formed an acquaintanceship which seems to have been tolerably intimate, and to which we owe some instructive sidelights on his character. The poet Gray was then resident at the University, and of him and his friend Mason Hervey saw a good deal.

Originally designed for the law, in pursuit of which he got as far as to enter at Lincoln's Inn, Frederick Hervey suddenly resolved to enter the Church. Upon the causes of this change of purpose no information is forthcoming. The worldliness of his subsequent character naturally suggests the hope of speedy ecclesiastical preferment as his incentive. But if this were so he must have suffered disappointment, for, though ordained in 1754, he remained for thirteen years without any clerical appointment save that of chaplain to George III., a post to which he was appointed in 1762, and which he combined with the lay office of Clerk of the Privy Seal. He was thus, as his friend Cole observes, a singular instance of a man of his learning, family, and connections that never attained any ecclesiastical preferment till he was made a bishop. Possibly the change was dictated by his early marriage, contrary to the wishes of the parents of both parties, when barely two-and-twenty, to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Jermyn Davers ; a lady older than himself, to whom the Bishop in later years was in the habit of referring disrespectfully as a ' majestic ruin,' but for whom he must

at one time have entertained a genuine affection, since, though the lady subsequently proved a wealthy spouse, through the death of her only brother without issue, both bride and bridegroom were portionless at the time of their marriage.<sup>1</sup> A letter from Mason to Gray indicates that the young couple in the early part of their married life were in very narrow circumstances.

There are no family papers available, if any exist, which belong to the career of Frederick Hervey prior to his elevation to the episcopate, and it is, therefore, impossible to follow his development during those years of early manhood when character becomes fixed and set in the mould of circumstance. While such indications as remain show that the clerical courtier spent his time in the pursuits and relaxations natural to a young Englishman of rank and position,<sup>2</sup> the letters of Lady Hervey seem to indicate that he undertook with some seriousness a course of theological study, though he chose for his mentor a divine whose views were unorthodox enough to leave him open to the charge of infidelity; and the Deism of which the Bishop of Derry is accused by Charlemont was probably imbibed at the feet of Dr. Conyers Middleton. But whatever the young clergyman's private aberrations from the straight and narrow pathway of the Thirty-nine Articles, it is certain that he must have applied himself seriously to the study of divinity. Some of the Bishop's MS. sermons survived long enough to be perused by his most distinguished successor in the see of Derry, and to Wesley's eulogy on 'his Lordship's useful and judicious sermon on blasphemy of the Holy Ghost' may be added the testimony of so eminent a critic as the

<sup>1</sup> A miniature of this lady preserved at Ickworth, shows her to have been possessed, at the time of her marriage at least, of considerable personal attractions.

<sup>2</sup> In Dodsley's 'Collection of Poems by Various Hands' (1758), vol. iii. p. 183, there is a poetical apologue 'On the Origin of Cards—A Tale,' addressed to the Hon. Miss Carpenter, which, in a MS. annotation in the copy in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, is stated to be by the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Hervey. The poem belongs to that order of verse of which the 'Rape of the Lock' is the most classic example, but the lines are poor.

Archbishop of Armagh (Dr. Alexander) to the theological erudition of Lord Bristol.

Much of Hervey's time at this period seems to have been devoted to the gratification of the dominant passion of his life—the passion for travel—by which his later years were entirely absorbed. Neither the temporal duties of the Clerk of the Privy Seal nor the spiritual preoccupations of the Court Chaplain were so engrossing as to interfere with frequent and extended visits to the Continent. In 1765 he started on a lengthened tour in Italy, visiting Vesuvius in company with his old schoolfellow Sir William Hamilton, and undertaking in the following year, in company with Mr. Burnaby, the English chaplain at Leghorn, a tour through Corsica, of which the record contained in the journal of his fellow traveller was largely utilised in Boswell's account of that island. The visit to Vesuvius was made on the eve of an eruption, and, approaching incautiously too close to the volcano, Hervey was severely wounded in the arm. Volcanic and geological phenomena appear to have henceforth had a great attraction for him. In subsequent travels he continually visited both Vesuvius and Etna, and in his communications with Sir William Hamilton, who published a volume of 'Observations on Volcanoes of the Two Sicilies,' he constantly alludes to the subject; while the letters of the Bishop to Sir John Strange, the English Resident at Venice, testify to the interest he took in that great natural curiosity adjacent to his diocese, the Giants' Causeway, to the geological peculiarities of which he was among the first to direct the attention of scientific men.

If promotion was slow in coming to the future bishop, the delay does not seem to have been attributable to any bashfulness on the part of the aspirant. Hervey seems to have had a particular desire to be appointed to the headship of a Cambridge College, a position for which, indeed, according to the standard of the day, he was not altogether ill equipped in point of scholarship, though his subsequent career scarcely suggests his suitability in other respects. On the death of Dr. Chapman, in 1760, he applied for the Master-



ship of Magdalene College, but found it had been already disposed of; and four years later sought to procure the retirement of Dr. Bernardeston from the headship of Corpus Christi, in the belief that he would himself be appointed to that position. He also sought more strictly ecclesiastical preferment, and was an applicant more than once for the patronage of the Duke of Newcastle, who in one of his letters rebukes an importunity which made Hervey's application for the Deanery of Bristol the first information which the Minister had received of the vacancy. Gray, in one of his letters, deploras his friend's want of success in his search for promotion, and appears to have been anxious to assist. 'Here,' he writes, 'is a bishopric (St. David's) vacant. Can I anyhow serve him?'

In 1767, however, during his elder brother's brief tenure of the Irish Viceroyalty, Hervey was nominated to the bishopric of Cloyne, it is said at the instance of the King, who, according to the gossip of the day, charged his Viceroy to exercise his first piece of ecclesiastical patronage in favour of a brother who, it was hinted maliciously, would not have been so readily advanced had fraternal affection not been prompted by the suggestion of the sovereign. But, though the Bishop was certainly on the worst of terms with his second brother, Augustus, and, according to Walpole, was prepared to aid in proving the invalidity of that nobleman's marriage with the Duchess of Kingston, in order to prevent a new alliance which might interfere with his own succession to the Bristol title and estates, there is no warrant for this malicious assumption. The appointment was certainly due to the spontaneous suggestion of Lord Bristol, though, as a letter in the 'Chatham Correspondence' shows, the King's eagerness to promote his chaplain had no need to be stimulated by his Viceroy's zeal in his brother's behalf. On the death of his eldest brother the Bishop referred with obvious sincerity in a letter to his friend Strange to the loss of 'the kindest friend and the most affectionate brother,' and, in reference to a bequest of 10,000*l.*, observes, 'He has testified his kindness to me to the last; but no accession of wealth,

especially to one in my situation, can compensate for the loss of a real friend.' The appointment to the see of Cloyne, which was made in February 1767, was near being snatched from the grasp of the designated prelate by the accident of his brother's resignation of the Lord-Lieutenancy before the formalities connected with the nomination had been completed. An attempt was made to induce Lord Bristol's successor to bestow the office on another aspirant, and Hervey seems to have owed the confirmation to the see to the powerful intervention of Lord Shelburne, whose friendship was destined to exercise a notable influence on the Bishop's political career.

The new bishop, who was still travelling on the Continent at the time of his appointment, lost no time in assuming the active duties of the episcopate, on which, like many of his colleagues in an age when it was customary to bestow lawn sleeves upon the cadets of noble houses as the reward for the political services of their relatives, he entered in the full vigour of early manhood.<sup>1</sup> He arrived in Ireland at a moment of peculiar interest in the political history of the island. The year 1767 marked a fresh chapter in the relations between the English Government and the Irish Parliament, and a change of method on the part of the British Cabinet had led to the resignation of the viceroyalty by Lord Bristol before he had discharged any of the functions of his position save that of nominating the successor to Bishop Johnson in the see of Cloyne. The system prevalent through the first half of the eighteenth century, under which the Viceroys spent only a few weeks in Ireland each alternate year at the opening of the biennial sessions of the Irish Parliament, had made the Lords Jus-

<sup>1</sup> Before proceeding to Ireland Hervey spent some time in England, and in Gray's correspondence we catch glimpses of his lordship of Cloyne 'very jolly,' and devouring with boyish enjoyment, in company with the poet, 'four raspberry puffs together in Cranbourne Alley, standing at a pastrycook's shop in the street.' Mason describes him at the same date as preaching for him at York, whence he went to Durham, where it was reported 'he danced at the assembly with a conquering mien, and all the misses swear he is the genteeldest thing they ever set eyes on, and wants nothing but two feet more in height.'

tices, who governed the country in the absence of the Lord-Lieutenant, the sole depositaries of power and patronage; and the rivalries of these partisan substitutes for the Sovereign had led to difficulties and embarrassments of a very serious kind. With the object of checking more effectively the power of the great nobles Chatham insisted on putting a stop to this viceregal absenteeism, and announced to his ministers that the vicegerent would in future be expected to perform in person the duties of his office. The great statesman seems also to have had in view a complete change in the principles of Irish government, which there is some reason to believe included a union of the Legislatures and a very large measure of Roman Catholic relief, and Lord Bristol appears to have undertaken the viceroyalty with the idea that it would be his business to carry out such a policy. But, whatever its details, the programme was upset by Chatham's illness, and 'the man who could and would have supported him in the noble plan that was formed'<sup>1</sup> being no longer available, Bristol at once resigned his post. Thereupon Lord Townshend was sent to Ireland to initiate that new system of managing the venal politicians of College Green which has given his viceroyalty and that of his successor, Lord Harcourt, so bad an eminence in the annals of Parliamentary corruption.

This new era in the political relations of the two islands was coincident with the first dawning of the liberal movement, which in the course of the ensuing generation was to lead Ireland to the apogee of her legislative independence. The Roman Catholics of Ireland were beginning to show the first stirrings which betokened their awaking from the long slumber that followed the violation of the Treaty of Limerick; and, though some years were still to elapse before any formal relaxation of the severity of the penal laws was wrung from the Irish Parliament, the more thoughtful observers of Irish affairs were beginning to apprehend the nature of those difficulties which the revolt of the American colonies and the French Revolution were

<sup>1</sup> Lady Hervey's Letters.

ere long to press home on the attention of the least considerate.

Hervey, however, though he applied himself from the first to a study of the social and political conditions of the country, was content for a time to stand aloof from parties, and the devotion to his diocesan duties and the abstinence from political intrigue which marked the first years of his episcopate are in striking contrast as well to the complete indifference to the duties of his office which he manifested in later years as to the mischievous violence of his intervention in politics in the era of the Volunteer Convention. His tenure of the see which had been dignified by the episcopate of Berkeley<sup>1</sup> lasted for little more than a year; but he left his mark upon the diocese by bringing to a termination, with results very advantageous to his successors, a long-standing agrarian dispute which for more than a generation had impaired the cordiality of the relations between the dwellers on the Church lands of Cloyne and the occupants of the Palace. The account of this dispute and its termination, as narrated in Brady's 'Records of Cloyne,' strikingly attests the vigour, resolution, and business capacity which, when he chose to exert himself, marked Hervey's actions.

Early in 1768 the young prelate was nominated by Lord Townshend, at the instance of Shelburne, to succeed Bishop Barnard in the opulent see of Derry. A well-authenticated anecdote records the jest with which the fortunate Bishop received the news of his translation. He was amusing himself with some youthful companions in a jumping competition when the letter announcing his promotion was placed in his hands. 'I will jump no more,' said the Bishop, withdrawing from the contest, 'for I have distanced you all. I have jumped from Cloyne to Derry.' Arrived in the North of Ireland, Hervey appears to have applied himself at once and with diligence to the affairs of his very

<sup>1</sup> 'Is it not, think you,' wrote Mason to Gray in irony, 'according to the order of things (I mean not the general, but the peculiar order of our own times) that the mitre which was so lately on the brows of the man with every virtue under heaven should now adorn those of our friend Frederic?'

important diocese, and, whatever his subsequent failings, it must be acknowledged that he brought to the discharge of his duties, both as bishop and as citizen, an activity, a public spirit, and a zeal for improvement which were then far from common among his brethren of the episcopal bench. The emoluments of the bishopric, which at the date of his appointment amounted to 7,000*l.*, rose ultimately, under the skilful management of its new occupant, to a princely revenue not far short of 20,000*l.* a year. Attached to the bishopric were 70,000 acres of land, and for the renewal fines on the leases of the diocesan estate the Bishop received immense sums, which he spent with lavish profusion. He inaugurated a movement for providing a new and splendid bridge over the Foyle, and headed the subscription list with a contribution of 1,000*l.* In this project he took an extraordinary interest, publishing an account of the intended structure in the gazettes of Switzerland and France, and inviting plans for its erection from foreign engineers. He also undertook at great expense operations for prospecting the coal-fields of the North of Ireland, which after a lapse of a hundred and twenty years are once more being exploited, and employed armies of labourers in the construction of roads through the more remote districts of his diocese. At the same time he gratified his passion for architecture by building in two of the wildest and most distant extremities of the see the magnificent mansions of Downhill and Ballyscullion, which divided with the splendid edifice of Ickworth those treasures of Italian painting and sculpture for which in later years he ransacked the Continent, and to procure which he not only lavished the whole of his episcopal income, but even crippled the resources of his successors in the family estates.

Nor, in these earlier years at least, was the activity of the Bishop limited to the merely personal and selfish objects which ultimately engrossed his regard. He found on his arrival that the majority of the incumbents of the diocesan livings were non-resident, and that, although in the enjoyment of incomes ranging from 250*l.* to 1,500*l.* a year, these clergymen provided for the duties of their cures by paying



50*l.* a year to a curate, which, as the Bishop observed, was their own estimate of the worth of the service for which they received such rich emoluments. Hervey did whatever his episcopal authority permitted to enforce residence on the incumbents, and insisted on raising the status of their deputies. He also busied himself in a scheme for providing pensions for the widows of deserving rectors, to which his own contributions were constantly given on a large and liberal scale. He marked his first year by an exhaustive visitation of every parish in the diocese, and a layman, writing towards the close of the year 1768, after recounting the various instances of the new Bishop's energy, concludes his report by observing that 'if he goes on as he has begun we shall not grudge him the monstrous income of his bishopric.' Before the close of 1768 his energy and public spirit had so impressed the citizens of Londonderry as to win him the honour, never previously accorded to their bishop, of the freedom of the city. Another outlet for his superabundant energies, which enabled him to combine the improvement of the diocese with the gratification of his delight in architecture, was the adorning of his cathedral and of many of his churches with elaborate spires. He presented the cathedral with a handsome spire of cut freestone, which, however, was too heavy for the tower which supported it, and had to be taken down; and in one of his letters to John Beresford, the well-known head of the Irish revenue, whose kindred taste for architecture is commemorated in Gandon's *chef-d'œuvre*, the Dublin Custom-House, the Bishop develops his views on this question of spires with much elaboration. 'Let the Church decorate the country, if it cannot receive it,' he concludes, 'and let its steeple and spire make it the visible as well as the Established Church.'<sup>1</sup> His interest in buildings connected with the Church survived his neglect of all the more serious duties of his office, and one of his last

<sup>1</sup> In 1778, when there was a prospect of a large and immediate extension of Roman Catholic liberties, he wrote to his daughter from Rome: 'If such a bill should pass I pledge myself to bring 60,000*l.* sterling within eighteen months into the kingdom for the purpose of building cathedrals, churches, and chapels.'

extant letters is an angry remonstrance, addressed to Lord Cavan, at the injury done by the King's troops, during the disturbances of the rebellion, to the palace at Derry, which he had then long ceased to inhabit, and to which he had no intention of returning.<sup>1</sup> So favourably did Hervey's energy contrast with the apathy of most of his episcopal brethren that, in a striking speech of Shelburne's in 1779 on the state of the Irish Church, the Bishop of Derry was bracketed with Primate Robinson in honourable contrast to the rest of the bishops, and his example held up for imitation.

But the most curious trait in Hervey's relations with his diocese was his cordiality with both Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters, to the building of whose chapels and meeting-houses and to the support of whose clergy and ministers he contributed almost as freely as to those of his own communion. At a time when Roman Catholic places of worship were barely tolerated by the Protestants of the North of Ireland the Bishop was anxious to encourage the erection of decent chapels, and when he built a new church for his own flock he would hand over the old one to the parish priest. He was on the best terms with the Presbyterian ministers, and in the dispensation of his episcopal hospitality would invite the clergy of all denominations to his table. A set of apartments at Downhill were known as the Curates' Corridor, and their use was not confined to clergymen of his own Church. The Reverend Classon Porter, who in a little pamphlet, published some years ago, has collected many of the traditional stories which attest the eccentricities of this very original prelate, has preserved a capital anecdote of one of the Bishop's clerical festivities, at which, after regaling his guests with an excellent repast, he ordered his horses out of the stables, and, desiring the reverend gentlemen to mount, set the representatives of the rival communions to an equine contest on the sands at Downhill. According to the Dissenting historian of this comic competition the Presbyterian ministers, being of lighter substance than the portly clergy of the Establish-

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, p. 98.

ment, were in every instance victorious over their rivals, and the Bishop heartily enjoyed the discomfiture of his clergy.

Though the later career of the earl-bishop conclusively negatives the hypothesis of his having been animated by anything approaching to real spirituality, his curiously compounded nature was certainly not devoid of an admixture of religious feeling. The 'admirable solemnity' with which, according to Wesley, he celebrated the Holy Communion was not a mere exhibition of hypocrisy assumed in deference to the exigencies of his position and profession. His invitation to the well-known divine Skelton to become his chaplain and preach his consecration sermon appears to have been prompted by a sincere admiration for the learning and piety of that writer, who was personally unknown to him except by the merit of his theological books. There were occasions, too, when he could exhibit real feeling. On one of these, being solicited for a benediction by an aged clergyman of his diocese, known for his exemplary life, the Bishop demurred. 'You,' he said, 'are more fitted to give a blessing than I,' and insisted on receiving the old man's blessing. And there is a pretty story of a confirmation held by the Bishop in his cathedral, at which there appeared among the candidates a young girl, the orphaned darling of her aged grandfather, who attended her to the ceremony. As the maiden knelt to receive the episcopal benediction, the old man moved forward and placed his hand on the head of his grandchild. The chaplain intervening to check this irregularity, the Bishop, touched with the old man's tenderness, forbade the interference of his subordinate. 'Nay,' he said finely, 'mine is the benediction of office, his the benediction of love. Why should they not be joined?' To these illustrations of the better side of the Bishop's character must be added the examples of real benevolence and kindness of disposition which even so hostile a critic as Charlemont felt constrained to record.<sup>1</sup>

Hervey's first intervention in Irish politics was prompted

<sup>1</sup> See Charlemont's Autobiography; *Historical MSS. Commission*, Twelfth Report, App. x. pp. 166-7.

by the difficulties which he experienced in his diocese through the operation of the tithe system. He writes in November 1773 from Dublin to his friend Strange, 'I have been so immersed in politics as to be totally engrossed by them. My object is to change the whole system of our ecclesiastical property, to abolish tithe, and to give the clergy land in lieu of it.' The measures which Hervey recommended for securing this object exhibit singular acuteness and foresight. In a letter written long years after<sup>1</sup> he gives the then Chief Secretary of Ireland, Pelham, the results of his experience, and diagnoses Irish discontent in these pregnant sentences:—

After thirty years' experience and a more intimate acquaintance with the constitution, pulse, and habits of your frantic patient than any one of my cloth, after having gained his affection, enjoyed his confidence, and merited his esteem, I will venture to assure you he is an animal easily led, not to be driven; and that, in plain English, there are two fundamental causes of his discontent and of his savage resentment—tithes; and the nature, quality, and pitiful dependence of his teachers on their hearers, who, if they do not preach what others like to hear, are sure to be first ill paid and then dismissed.

The exactions of the tithe proctor, in the view of the Bishop, made himself, the parson, and the established religion all equally hated, and Hervey submitted proposals to the bench of bishops which received their sanction, and which, he says, it was arranged should be tried experimentally in Derry, but to which his own ill-health had prevented him from giving effect.

To this question of tithes the Bishop does not seem to have recurred; but the condition of the Roman Catholic priesthood long occupied his attention. His frequent residence in Italy gave him opportunities of learning much that was hidden from his colleagues at home, and from English statesmen, as to the ideas entertained at the Vatican on the one hand and among the members of the Irish Brigade in France on the other, in regard to the

<sup>1</sup> From Venice, Jan. 16, 1798: *Pelham Papers*.

future of Ireland. In a striking letter to his daughter he describes the means he took to arrive at a knowledge of the intrigues of the Irish abroad with the Court of Rome, and the result of these inquiries convinced him that the outbreak of war between Great Britain and France, following on the American War of Independence, would give to Irish disaffection an opportunity which, if not counteracted by concessions and precautions, might prove fatal to the English connection. In a letter addressed to Sir William Hamilton, whose schoolfellow he had been, and with whom he preserved through life a friendship which the equivocal nature of his intimacy in later years with the wife of that ambassador does not seem to have disturbed, the Bishop indicates very clearly his view of the situation in Ireland and of the policy demanded of Great Britain in circumstances of difficulty which had, not for the first time or the last, been hailed as Ireland's opportunity; condemning in strong terms the maintenance of the penal code, and laying stress on the serious danger to the connection between the two countries involved in the refusal to sanction the free exercise of the Roman Catholic religion—'a Gordian knot which, I fear, only the sword of a civil war can cut.'

Impressed with the reality of these dangers, with which, as both his letters in 'The Two Duchesses' and those in the MS. correspondence with his friend Sir John Strange show, his thoughts at this time were much occupied, and sincerely detesting the odious severity of the penal laws, Hervey applied himself with great energy to the task of pressing upon Ministers the desirability of making the concessions embodied in the Catholic Relief Bill of 1778 as wide as possible. In two letters addressed to Pery, long the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons and one of the most liberal-minded Irishmen of his day, he not only urges the importance of concession while concession could be gracefully yielded, but sketches a policy for the future which exhibits a remarkable appreciation of the enduring difficulties of Irish politics, and suggests expedients for removing them which are far in advance of his time. He



proposed to secure the loyalty of the priesthood by vesting the appointment of the Roman Catholic bishops and clergy in the Crown, and by giving them an endowment in land; and 'in order to perpetuate the political orthodoxy of our Irish priests' suggested the establishment in each of the Irish provinces of a seminary for the education of the priesthood. It is to be observed that these letters, though they advocate a policy more liberal than any which the ideas of the time would sanction, are distinctly Unionist in tone, and show no trace of that Separatist spirit subsequently imputed to him and which seemed to mark the Bishop's actions when, a few years later, dissatisfied with the extent of the concessions, he threw himself into the Volunteer movement.<sup>1</sup>

The large toleration and the acute perception of the real difficulties, which, though they lay at the root of the Irish problem, were unperceived at that time by even the more far-sighted of his contemporaries, may now appear to be the veriest commonplaces of statesmanship; but the reader who would measure the degree by which Hervey's views on Irish questions were in advance of his time must remember that these letters, which in their constructive statesmanship

<sup>1</sup> 'Ireland,' he wrote from Rome to Pery in May 1778, 'if the war with France takes place, must inevitably be thrown into the greatest confusion. The first blow will certainly be directed there, and the Roman Catholics, exasperated by repeated disappointments, are ripe for an almost general revolt. . . . The disgust which prevails here upon the baffling of every attempt to relieve their countrymen is better conceived than expressed. Their case seems now to be desperate, and I much fear their conduct will be equally so. No one knows better than you do the disadvantages arising to Ireland from the opprobrious solecism of our penal laws against the Papists. A reasonable concession in time might secure that allegiance and that fidelity which the fate of war might, perhaps, hereafter totally deny us. . . . Could you at this perilous crisis obtain a legal exercise of that silly but harmless religion which they now exercise illegally, and a revocation of that impolitic statute called the Civil Act, which has so reduced the list of Popish nobility that all the influence of the Popish people and gentry is thrown into the hands of the clergy, I am very well persuaded that the French upon their landing could not procure an insurrection of fifty Papists. . . . I hope we shall be too wise to act the second part of the American tragedy, and wait until our enemy compels us to terms of moderation.' *Historical MSS. Commission, Eighth Report, App. i. p. 197.*

anticipate the policy which led, twenty years later, and on the compulsion of the French Revolution, to the endowment of Maynooth, and after a lapse of fifty years was applied to the problems raised by Catholic Emancipation and the Tithe Legislation, were written at a time when even the first of the measures by which the severity of the penal laws was gradually relaxed had not yet reached the Statute Book. Grattan was as yet a novice in the debates of the Legislature in which he was soon to eclipse all competitors, the Volunteers had not yet been formed, and the era of reform was still undreamt of. Whatever view may be taken of the Bishop's suggestions as a contribution towards practical statesmanship at the time they were offered, it is impossible to deny him the credit of having discerned and set forth a very important factor of the Irish problem with a candour and clearness which no contemporary equalled, and with a breadth of tolerance quite remarkable at a time when the attitude of the dominant party towards Roman Catholics and Dissenters was still the same mixture of contempt and disgust which had animated the writings of Swift.

The views thus urged upon those among Irish politicians who came nearest to himself in opinion were not adopted; and it was reserved for a later generation to apply to the problems of the education of the clergy and the collection of tithe the specifics thus early foreshadowed for disorders which, alone among his contemporaries, Hervey appears to have appreciated. But the relief afforded by the Act of 1778 proved sufficient to obviate the immediate fear of a Franco-Irish alliance and to gratify, though not to satisfy, the Bishop. 'The countenance of the French Ministers in this place upon the first intelligence of the Roman Catholic Bill,' he wrote from Rome<sup>1</sup> to his daughter in the autumn

<sup>1</sup> Of the impression created by the Bishop's demeanour during his stay in Rome in 1778 a curious account survives in an unpublished journal by Sir Edward Newenham, a well-known Irish politician of the day, who chanced to be in the Eternal City at the same time. Describing a visit to the Sistine Chapel, Newenham says: 'The Bishop of Derry most absurdly appeared in his English bishop's dress. He was laughed at by every one. For this piece of absurdity he was obliged to go to the lower part of the chapel, among the

of 1778, 'was the clearest proof how salutary that measure was, and that the medicine would go, if the faint-hearted physicians permitted it, to the root of the evil; but remember, dear child,

Truths would you teach, and save a sinking land,  
All fear, none aid you, and few understand.

The prejudices of some, the interests of others, the fears of still more, and the indolence, indifference, and supineness of all are barriers which even Lord Chatham found insurmountable.' <sup>1</sup>

The reference to Chatham, for whom the Bishop never lost an opportunity of expressing his admiration, and of whom he quoted towards the close of his life that 'he did bestride this narrow world like a stage Colossus, and these petty men do but peep between his legs,' suggests a clue to Hervey's liberalism in Irish affairs, which has not hitherto been sufficiently noticed, and seems to indicate that the Bishop's political principles and his peculiar views of Irish politics were formed under the inspiration of the elder Pitt, as their later development was certainly paralleled by the opinions of Shelburne, the remarkable statesman who for a time wore the mantle, and in the divided Cabinet of Rockingham led the adherents of Chatham. Hervey's tenure of his lay office at Court had been coincident with the grand period of Pitt's career, and during Chatham's second Ministry he was an official in the Premier's own department. It may well have been that this young scion of a family which had played a great part in the Court politics of the preceding generation was admitted to a share in the ideas on Irish politics of the great object of his political veneration. The coincidence of their views is at any rate remarkably illustrated in their attitude towards Irish Presbyterianism. There is a curiously close resemblance between the language in which the great Minister, common people, while my sons and I were in the same upper division with the Cardinals. After this behaviour the eccentric Bishop was held in the greatest contempt. Scarcely a nobleman would visit him.'

<sup>1</sup> *The Two Duchesses*, p. 58.

in a letter to the Irish Viceroy in 1760, defended the Presbyterians as a very valuable branch of the Reformation, and a body which, 'with regard to their civil principles, have in all times shown themselves to be in England and Ireland firm and zealous supporters of the glorious revolution under King William and of the present happy Establishment,' and the passage in Hervey's letter twenty-five years later to Arthur Young, in which he defends the advocacy by a bishop of the Established Church of 'the anti-episcopal schismatics called Presbyterians,' by pointing out that, 'as to their political principles, I think them, from their system of parity, and from their practice in most parts of Europe, infinitely more favourable to political liberty than ours.'<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not there was any sort of connection between the great commoner and the young cleric who became a bishop while Chatham was still at the head of the Government, the closeness of Hervey's connection with the brilliant leader of the Chathamite Whigs is no more matter of conjecture than the correspondence of opinion between the two men which is demonstrable from the writings of both. In his leaning towards democracy, which caused Bentley to say of him that he was the only Minister he had ever known who did not fear the people, in his tolerance for Papists and Dissenters, and in his attitude towards Parliamentary reform, Shelburne had no fellow among his contemporaries who shared his opinions as cordially as the Bishop of Derry, with whom he was on terms of intimacy and confidence. The ideas upon Irish politics expressed by Lord Shelburne in a paper published in Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice's valuable life of that statesman are identical with the views of his friend as indicated in such of the papers of the latter as survive. This alliance and resemblance between two of the most original characters of their day was not lost upon some at least of their contemporaries; and the peculiar venom of all Horace Walpole's references to the Bishop may be accounted for in some degree by his

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography of Arthur Young*, p. 129.

hatred for the statesman he so constantly vilifies in his correspondence and memoirs. In a letter to Sir Horace Mann in 1783 Walpole denounces 'that mitred Proteus the Count-Bishop,' whose crimes, he says, can only be palliated by his profligate folly, and adds that 'his brother Proteus' (Shelburne) would have sent him the previous year to Versailles to negotiate the peace, had the Bishop consented to act. 'But to be a peacemaker,' Walpole acrimoniously adds in explanation of Hervey's refusal, 'was too much the character of a bishop for such a bishop to accept.'<sup>1</sup>

Upon the motives which a few years later led to the incongruous apparition in the midst of the armed volunteers of Ireland for which the Bishop is best known in history and of which Jonah Barrington and Froude<sup>2</sup> have left pictures too vivid and too familiar to justify any attempt to sketch it here, neither the 'Hamilton Papers' nor the letters printed in 'The Two Duchesses' throw any vivid light. Indeed, they serve rather to intensify the inconsistency between the calm and even statesmanlike appreciations of the political situation which the Bishop was capable of writing and the violence of the actions into which he plunged at the very moment when, judging by ordinary standards, it was to be expected that his accession to the title and estates of the earldom of Bristol should have served to strengthen his ties with England.<sup>3</sup> More of his time was spent at home at this period than had been usual with him for some years, and the gout, which was the ostensible reason for his constant trips to the Continent,

<sup>1</sup> *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. by Peter Cunningham, viii. p. 440.

<sup>2</sup> Here is Froude's description of the Bishop's appearance in the streets of Dublin on his way to the meeting of the National Convention of the Volunteers at Dublin: 'He sat in an open landau drawn by six horses magnificently apparelled in purple, with white gloves, gold fringed, and gold tassels dangling from them, and buckles of diamonds on knee and shoe. His own mounted servants, in gorgeous liveries, attended on either side of his carriage. George Robert Fitzgerald rode in front with a squadron of Dragoons in gold and scarlet uniforms, on the finest horses which could be bought in the land. A second squadron brought up the rear in equal splendour, and thus, with slow and regal pace, the procession passed on, volunteers falling in with bands playing and colours flying, the crowd shouting, "Long life to the Bishop!"' the Bishop bowing to the crowd.'

<sup>3</sup> The Bishop had succeeded to the Earldom in 1780.



seems to have troubled him little from 1778 to 1785. The summer and winter of 1782 were spent at Ickworth, when he became intimate with Arthur Young, who was in the habit of dining with him every Thursday, in company with other persons of learning and distinction; gatherings of which Young says that the conversation was such as to make these weekly visits to Ickworth the most agreeable days he had ever known. He renewed his connection with Shelburne, whom he visited at Bowood, where Bentham, who met him there, was much struck by his conversation, and praised him in his diary as 'a most excellent companion, pleasant, intelligent, well read and well bred, liberal-minded to the last degree, has been everywhere, and knows everything.'

But intemperate and inflammatory as was the action of the Bishop of Derry in the famous Volunteer Convention, and natural as it was that the violence of conduct and demeanour, which was far more noticeable in the case of an English nobleman than it would have been in an Irish politician, should provoke the most angry hostility, and give rise to the gravest suspicions, there are grounds for questioning the justice of the view of his motives and designs which, adopting the adverse estimates of contemporaries who wrote as partisans, even when they were not, as in the case of Charlemont, the judgments of avowed enemies, has been followed by most historians. Mr. Lecky considers that the Bishop, had he procured his election to the chair of the Convention, would have pushed matters to a rebellion, and refuses to admit that the assertion of Clare, in 1798, that there was not a rebel among the Volunteers, or any one who would not willingly have shed his blood in defence of his Sovereign and of the Constitution, was true of the violent Bishop. Froude writes, with palpable extravagance, that the Bishop clung, even after the dissolution of the Convention, to the dream of a separate Ireland, of which he was to be king. It is, indeed, unquestionable that, both during the sittings of the Convention and afterwards, the Government viewed the effects of his dangerous activity with suspicion and even alarm. Lord Northington, the Lord-Lieutenant, is said

to have actually authorised the Bishop's arrest, and in the following year the violence of Bristol's language in acknowledging the addresses which were presented to him at Derry on his return from Dublin, led to grave discussion between Pitt and the succeeding Viceroy, the Duke of Rutland, as to the propriety of an impeachment. But, upon the other hand, it is remarkable that even the least charitable character that has been drawn of him—that by Lord Charlemont, who had the best possible knowledge of his designs—though vehement in its denunciations of the Bishop's advocacy of the movement for Reform, and his encouragement of the Roman Catholic demands, does not accuse him of separatist designs; and, although the extravagance of speech and action was the Bishop's own, it will be found that in his policy he was not animated by any wild revolutionary notions, but rather that he was pursuing, by methods peculiar to himself, objects in which he was cordially supported by some of the most eminent of English statesmen.

For it is a complete misapprehension to suppose that the leaders of the Volunteers were Irish agitators who acted without the concurrence and encouragement of English politicians. Not only did Fox and Burke, and their immediate connections, approve and assist the early policy of Grattan, but there was a considerable section among English Whigs who were prepared to act with those who went beyond Grattan in their views as to Reform. In November 1779 Lord Shelburne gave utterance in the House of Lords to an animated vindication of the Volunteers, and his approval of their aims at that time was not alienated by their later action. The demand of their Convention was in the main a demand for Parliamentary reform; and Shelburne was an ardent reformer, who not merely favoured the extension of the franchise among Protestants, but, like the Bishop, was in favour of the admission of Roman Catholics to complete political liberty. In the year 1782 he had actually mooted a Reform Bill in the Rockingham Cabinet, and when, in the following year, Flood broke with Grattan

on this question, his natural sympathy with advanced opinion, which would have led Shelburne in any case to side with the elder patriot, was confirmed by the alliance between Grattan and Shelburne's hated rival Fox. There is, in fact, good reason for the conjecture that, in insisting on driving Reform to the front in Ireland, Flood (who, be it remembered, became himself a member of the English House of Commons in 1783) was not acting solely with an eye to Ireland, but was aiming to provide his English allies with a precedent from College Green which might be successfully relied upon at Westminster.<sup>1</sup> That this is no extravagant hypothesis no one who has studied the history of Parliamentary reform can doubt. Favoured by Chatham, Reform had at this period attained a firmer footing than it was to reach again for half a century, and, could Shelburne have secured the co-operation of Fox in the Chathamite Ministry which he formed in 1782, and in which the younger Pitt first held Cabinet office, the great measure of 1832 might have been anticipated by nearly two generations. But of Shelburne Fox had an incurable distrust, and the vehemence of the great Whig statesman's denunciation of the doings of the Volunteers<sup>2</sup> seems to have been accentuated by

<sup>1</sup> The sympathy with which the Volunteer movement and its Reform policy were regarded by English political theorists is strikingly attested in Bentham's *Defence of Radicalism from Particular Experience in the case of Ireland from 1778 to 1788*. Bentham's close friendship with Shelburne has been pointed out above.

<sup>2</sup> 'If the volunteers are treated as they ought to be,' wrote Fox to Lord Northington on Nov. 1, 1782, 'I look to their dissolution as a certain and not very distant event; if otherwise, I reckon their Government, or rather Anarchy, as firmly established as such a thing is capable of being. If you ask me what I mean by *firmness*, I have no scruple in saying I mean it in the strictest sense, and understand by it the determination not to be swayed in the slightest degree by the volunteers, not even to attend to any petitions that may come from them. This sounds violent, but I am clear it is right.' And to another correspondent he wrote at the same period, 'If either the Parliamentary reform in any shape, however modified, or any other point claimed by the Bishop of Derry and his volunteers, be conceded, Ireland is irretrievably lost for ever. The question is not whether this or that measure shall take place, but whether the Constitution of Ireland, which Irish patriots are so proud of having established, shall exist, or whether the Government shall be purely military, as ever it was under the Prætorian bands.' See *Life of Grattan*, vol. iii.

the fact that they were inspired by his rival's ally. The suspicion that the Bishop's behaviour at the Convention was inspired by treasonable motives, or anti-English ideas, is further negated by what is known of his political opinions in later years. The language of his letter to Pelham in 1797, already referred to, is as strongly Unionist in tone as his letters to Pery in 1778, and his last recorded public act is his concurrence in an Address in favour of the Union.<sup>1</sup> All his letters on public questions breathe a strong Imperial patriotism, and in the very year before the meeting of the Convention he was the author of a proposal, which Shelburne encouraged, for building war ships by private contributions, and wrote desiring his friend Strange, if possible, to buy vessels from foreign Powers for the English navy to his order.

Viewed in this aspect, there is much to modify the harshness of the judgment hitherto passed upon the objects and motives of the Bishop's participation in the Volunteer Convention. But, to whatever degree his programme may have been approved by his political allies in England, his conduct was such as to forfeit all confidence, and to render co-operation impossible. The extravagance of his language and the wildness of his demeanour suggest that his natural eccentricity had at this period passed the border-line of sanity, and that the congenital infirmity which in his father had taken the physical form of epilepsy had in his case shown itself in temporary disorder of the brain.<sup>2</sup> The extravagance of his semi-regal entry into Dublin on the occasion of the

<sup>1</sup> There is a curious letter from the Bishop to his daughter, dated November 6, 1779, referring to a then projected union of the two legislatures. 'No one doubts of an union, nor do I believe there will be much difficulty about the terms. . . . God grant this may be true;' and in Sir E. Newenham's *Journal* the following curious passage corroborates this view: 'His conduct is unaccountable. He is violent against the Protestants, ridicules the Papists, and is an advocate for that absurd idea of making the Parliaments of both kingdoms one.' In a letter written to Boswell in 1779, the Bishop sought for information as to the effect of the Scotch Union on Edinburgh, and stated his opinion that the Irish capital would benefit by a similar measure.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter written to Sir William Hamilton on September 20, 1778, there occurs a passage which lends support to the hypothesis that the Bishop was



Convention might be set down to a desire to dazzle the public by a display of magnificence. But there were also ebullitions of purposeless eccentricity of a kind which made it plain that his reason was seriously affected. Horace Walpole, indeed, whose rancour against the Bishop seems to have been prompted by some personal grudge, suggests no such charitable hypothesis for the vagaries which at this time astonished society in London and Dublin alike, and seriously attributes the Bishop's fervour in behalf of the Roman Catholics to a design to procure a cardinal's hat. He asserts that the Bishop, who 'has renounced all religions to qualify himself for being a cardinal,' had, with the same object, translated into Italian and circulated at Rome his speech at the Convention in behalf of the Roman Catholics, flattering himself that, 'as episcopacy is deemed an indelible character, he would be admitted *ad eundem* (as they say at Oxford and Cambridge) into the Church of Rome.' <sup>1</sup>

Innuendoes such as this seem to be almost as fanciful and extravagant as the actions of the Bishop himself were wild and unaccountable. On his return to the North of Ireland after the Convention—a return which, according to Charlemont, was hastened by the apprehension of arrest—he busied himself in raising fresh corps of volunteers, and in holding levees and receiving addresses laudatory of his recent proceedings from a number of local bodies and corporations, in acknowledging which he used language of such extreme violence as, in the opinion of the Duke of Rutland, rendered him amenable to law. Pitt, however, took a more cool-headed view of these displays, and evidently knew enough of his man to reckon on the certainty that he would never translate the rashness of his language into action; though, at the same time, he dreaded the effects of a prosecution directed against one who, whatever his faults and excesses,

throughout his career affected with some sort of periodic mental disturbance which may have become aggravated in his latter years: 'Perhaps you will think that I am not yet recovered from some of my deliriums, and that I am still light-headed.'

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. by Peter Cunningham.



had become a popular hero with the Volunteers of the North.

Of this popularity there could be no question. One of the incidents in the Bishop's conduct which had most staggered Charlemont and the more moderate of the popular leaders had been his patronage of a character almost as exceptional as his own, the famous or infamous Fighting Fitzgerald. This extraordinary being, who was at this time notorious not only as the most daring duellist, the most reckless libertine, and the most lawless and most turbulent desperado in Ireland, who had not long before been condemned to a term of imprisonment as the result of a long and unseemly dispute with his father and brother, and who, not three years later, was executed for murder at Castlebar, was the Bishop's nephew by the marriage of his sister, Lady Mary Hervey, with a Mayo squire. He had acted during the proceedings of the Convention as the captain of the guard of cavalry which attended the Bishop to and from the Rotunda during its meetings. The open alliance between the prelate and the duellist had aggravated in many minds the offences of the Bishop. Yet such was the influence which the latter possessed, and so marked was the deference shown him, that the corporation of Londonderry voted the freedom of their city to Fitzgerald and entertained him at a public dinner. Fitzgerald, in acknowledging the compliment, attributed it to the desire of the citizens to do honour 'to that illuminated and illuminating constellation' his uncle. Nor were the Presbyterian ministers of Londonderry behind their laity in approving 'the liberality of his Lordship's religious sentiments.' The Presbytery of Derry, 'rejoicing in the opportunity of giving their tribute of deserved praise to a character in every respect so dignified,' expressed their approbation in a public address, and in reply received the grandiloquent assurance that 'the very rock which founds my cathedral is less immovable than my purpose to liberate this high-mettled nation from the petulant and rapacious oligarchy which plunder and insult it.' On the other hand, the accounts of the private extravagances of the

Bishop which the Government received were such as might suggest the excuse of insanity. He was reported to have turned his son, Lord Hervey, violently out of his house for presuming to differ with his political views, and to have used such treasonable language to the aide-de-camp of the Lord-Lieutenant and some other officers who dined with him 'as reduced the company to the alternative of flinging a bottle at his head or of quitting his company.' He is said to have actually gone so far as to ordain his disreputable nephew Fitzgerald, who at once signalised his admission to holy orders by fighting a duel, and to have promised him preferment in his diocese to the value of 2,000*l.* a year.<sup>1</sup> And when passing through Oxford, on his way to the Continent, he was recognised by an acquaintance attired 'in a light lilac coat and his volunteer hat, fiercely cocked, laced and with a cockade.'

The popularity in his own diocese which the Derry resolutions attest seems never to have been forfeited. In 1788, at a banquet in commemoration of the centenary of the shutting of the gates of Derry, the Bishop's name was honoured in his absence, in the commemorative ode composed for the occasion, as the friend and benefactor of mankind; and in the celebration of the relief of the maiden city in the following year the Bishop headed the procession to the cathedral, and laid the foundation-stone of a memorial arch. In 1790, on the opening of the bridge at Derry, he received addresses from the corporation, the citizens, and the volunteers of the city, and eulogised in his reply to the last-mentioned body that 'unbought auxiliary to an almost impotent Government which secured the internal peace and fixed the external safety of this kingdom.' A permanent memorial of the feelings which this singular bundle of inconsistencies inspired among men of opposite creeds survives in the obelisk reared in the park at Ickworth by inhabitants of Derry of every denomination, and including the Roman Catholic bishop and Dissenting ministers, which attests the munificence of his public

<sup>1</sup> See *Historical MSS. Commission*, 13th Report, App. iv. p. 376.

expenditure, the purity of his administration of his patronage, and the influence of his example in softening and reconciling the bitterness of sectarian animosity.<sup>1</sup>

From the letters published in 'The Two Duchesses' it appears pretty clear that it is from this period that the change in the Bishop's character which Mr. Lecky suggests must be dated. There is a good deal of evidence of this in his altered relations with his wife and family. Prior to 1783 the Bishop appears to have acted as a good husband and an affectionate father. His early letters to his daughter Elizabeth are couched in the language of affection, and are full of pleasant domestic allusions to his wife and their youngest daughter, Louisa, afterwards Lady Liverpool, who were the constant companions of his travels abroad. But thenceforward Lady Bristol's letters betoken a change in his demeanour. She bewails his conduct in confining her to Ickworth, on the plea of poverty, and in letting the family mansion at St. James's Square—conduct which attracted the attention of the inveterate gossip Horace Walpole, who detailed to Sir Horace Mann how, 'though an earl in lawn sleeves, who has an income of 25,000*l.*, he let his house in St. James's Square for the usurious rent of 700*l.* a year, without acquainting the Countess, who is a very respectable woman.' It does not appear, however, that the final estrangement with his wife and the complete abandonment of private ties and public duties which disgraced his latter years took place until considerably later. His absences abroad became more frequent and more prolonged, but not of a kind to provoke the scandal which the entire neglect of his duties subsequently aroused. So little does he seem to have anticipated in 1790 the voluntary exile in which the last ten years of his life were spent that, in replying to the address of the citizens of Derry in that year, he actually enlarged on the duty of residence as one of the obligations of his episcopal office. 'The duties of an extensive and opulent prelacy wear a superior character and a more binding tie. They summon loudly to residence and dis-

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, p. 100.

cipline; and a pious discharge of such duties can alone vindicate or insure the splendid rent-roll annexed to the office.' Yet in 1793 he left Ireland never to return; and the story is authentic which records how, in reply to the remonstrances on his absence addressed to him a year or two before his death by three of his episcopal brethren, he showed his contempt by sending to the Primate three peas in a bladder, accompanied by a couple of lines of doggerel in his own handwriting.<sup>1</sup>

The taste for foreign travel and the fondness for art which had marked Hervey from the outset of his career, and made him, with the exception of Gibbon, the best-informed Englishman of his time, outside the ranks of the professional diplomatists, on Continental affairs, seem to have grown more and more absorbing between 1784 and 1790. But he would appear, nevertheless, to have continued down to his final departure in 1793 to give tolerably close attention to that portion of his episcopal duty which concerned the business administration of his see. On his return from the Continent in 1789 he remained for over a twelvemonth in Ireland, largely occupied, doubtless, with the building of Ballyscullion, the second of the two great mansions he erected in his diocese. To this edifice, though never completed,<sup>2</sup> he devoted enormous sums, and he continued to the day of his death to despatch to Derry no inconsiderable share of the treasures he collected abroad. In 1792 he visited Ickworth, and appears then to have conceived the design of the splendid residence he reared there. To this object his last years were almost exclusively given up. He appropriated 12,000*l.* a year to the building, and in the ten years between his final departure to the Continent and his death he seems to have been continually occupied in giving orders to countless artists for the adornment of a palace in which he declared he would never set foot until it had been

<sup>1</sup> 'Three large blue-bottles sat upon three blown bladders;  
Blow, bottle-flies, blow—burst, blown bladders, burst.

'BRISTOL AND DERRY.'

<sup>2</sup> After the Bishop's death the unfinished building became a ruin. Some of its pillars now adorn the portico of St. George's Church in Belfast.

completed, and which in the result he never saw. From this time on his self-imposed expatriation seems to have been complete, though he kept up a correspondence with his daughter Elizabeth, to whom he occasionally wrote suggestions for the family aggrandisement, of which the most extraordinary was one for an alliance between his heir, Lord Hervey, and the Countess de la Marche, a natural daughter of the King of Prussia by the Countess von Lichtenau. This project he commended as certain to endow his son with a fortune of 10,000*l.* a year and to lead to a dukedom. The separation from his wife and the break in his domestic relations evidently cost him no pang whatever, and at sixty-three this extraordinary pagan, abandoning all his duties as husband and father, as bishop and peer, gave himself up to a life of the most absolute worldliness and the most doubtful morality. 'Pour moi, j'irai mon train,' he wrote to his daughter in 1796, 'and if I cannot be the Cæsar nor the Cicero I will be a less splendid but a more useful citizen, the Lucullus of my time, the midwife of talents, industry, and hidden virtues.'

It is but just to admit that in his efforts to achieve an ambition so incongruously unepiscopal he was in one direction at least not wholly unsuccessful. Not only did he get together a collection which, exclusive of what he had sent home, was valued in 1798 at 20,000*l.*, but he appears to have really been at pains not merely to add to his collection but to encourage art and assist struggling artists. The eminent sculptor Flaxman, writing to Sir William Hamilton in 1794, congratulates himself on being detained in Rome three more years by the patronage of Lord Bristol, and adds, 'I cannot conclude this letter without telling you how the liberality of Lord Bristol has reanimated the fainting body of art in Rome; for his generosity to me I must be silent, for I have not words to express its value.' The extent of his munificence was even more strikingly attested when, on the occupation of Rome in 1798, the Administrator of the Army of Italy was petitioned by no fewer than 343 artists to spare the collections of the Bishop, which had been seized by the



French. The petition set forth the liberality of a patron who had for forty years spent the greater part of his income in the encouragement of art, by whose bounty a number of the first artists of the day had been enabled to subsist during years of war little favourable to their pursuits, and appealed to the French Republic to preserve a unique collection. It was not without effect, for though the Bishop, who was himself detained a prisoner in Milan for several months, was for a time terrified for the safety of his treasures, General Berthier ultimately had the generosity to accept the trifling ransom of 400*l*. When the Bishop died at Albano in 1803, his effects in Rome were valued at some 14,000*l*.; and as he died with none but dependents about him, much of his property at Rome and Florence would have been plundered and dispersed had not Cardinal Erskine exerted his authority to preserve it with an energy and effectiveness which won warm acknowledgment from the Bishop's successors.

It had been well for the Bishop's reputation had this mania for art been the sole incongruity between his private tastes and his professional character. Unfortunately his relations with the fair sex were of a kind to provoke the scandalous stories which soon began to spread about him. Although there is no proof that the impropriety of his conduct went beyond a highly unepiscopal freedom of language and heedlessness of decorum, the character of the ladies with whom his name was chiefly connected was of a kind which gave probability to the grossest suggestions as to the nature of his *liaisons*. From 1792 to 1796 he was intimately associated with the notorious Emma, Lady Hamilton, and when the attentions of this elderly and episcopal cavalier had been eclipsed by the more ardent devotion of Nelson, the Bishop became no less closely attached to a lady of equally dubious virtue, the Countess von Lichtenau, the mistress of Frederick William II. of Prussia. His acquaintance with Nelson's unhappy mistress originated in a lifelong friendship with her husband, Sir William Hamilton, whose schoolfellow he had been, and with whom, as the Nelson-Hamilton papers show, he maintained an active correspon-

dence on political and scientific subjects throughout his career. The marriage of Hamilton and Emma took place in 1791, while the Bishop was in England, and on returning to the Continent the resumption of old relations with the husband was accompanied by the formation of the most intimate friendship with his wife. The easy-going character of the Ambassador at Naples encouraged and sanctioned an intimacy which was so far innocent that it was maintained with the entire cognisance of Sir William, to whom in his letters the Bishop constantly desired his 'best and constant love to dearest Emma,' or, to use the odd language of one of these epistles, 'ten thousand good wishes to dear, *respectable* Emma.' In another he longs to be at Caserta, the Hamiltons' home near Naples, 'to hear all your excellent anecdotes and dearest Emma's Dorick dialect, to eat woodcock pie, and quaff humble port.' The letters of Lady Hamilton evince without disguise the cordiality of her relations with the Bishop. 'Lord Bristol is with us at Caserta,' she writes to her old paramour Greville. 'He passes one week at Naples and one with us. He is very fond of me and very kind.' It would appear, however, that the homage of the Bishop, however ardent, was not unmixed with admonition or rebuke; and while he was capable of complimenting Lady Hamilton in the extravagant couplet—

Ah, Emma, who'd ever be wise  
If madness be loving of thee?—

he is said to have stung her on one occasion, when his visit was interrupted by a lady of questionable character, by departing with the sarcastic observation, 'It is permitted to a Bishop to visit one sinner, but quite unfitting that he should be seen in a brothel!'

Of the nature of his relations with the Countess von Lichtenau the history is more obscure, but the scandal was not less widespread. Several contemporary memoirs contain references to this *liaison*, and, whatever the extent of the intimacy, there is no doubt that the lady exercised a strong fascination on the Bishop down to the close of 1796, when returning to his allegiance to Lady Hamilton he broke

off all relations with her on the curious ground that the Countess had entered into intrigues with France. If, however, the scandalmongers testify to the doubtful conduct of this 'Comte-Evêque,' and to the extravagance of his garb—it was his habit to wear a white hat edged with purple, a coat of crimson silk or blue velvet, a black sash spangled with silver, and purple stockings—they do not fail to mention all his accomplishments, the liveliness of his conversation, his fund of anecdote, and the vein of satire, which made his company much sought after; whilst the letters published in Mr. Foster's book show him to have been a man of lively imagination and piquant wit, who could hold his own in any assembly. Yet, if we may accept a reminiscence of Goethe published in Erckmann's conversations with the poet, the Bishop met more than his match in the author of the 'Sorrows of Werther.' According to the poet, the Bishop, when passing through Jena, invited him to dinner, when in the course of conversation he upbraided the poet for having in his 'Werther' painted a character 'in every way immoral and damnable,' and given encouragement to the crime of suicide. The poet, however, met the charge with spirit, and turned the tables by inquiring what the Bishop had to say for the theology which drove weak-minded people to the madhouse by preaching the horrors of hell.

Of the concluding five years of the Bishop's life, from the date of his imprisonment by the French at Milan to his death, not much is known, though a few anecdotes which belong to this period indicate that they were passed much in the same way as the five which preceded them. He died at Albano on July 18, 1803, having, according to a letter from Nelson to Lady Hamilton, torn up a few hours before a will 'giving everything to those devils of Italians about him.' His remains were sent to England on board the 'Monmouth' for interment, and by a grim irony Mr. Elliot, the British Minister at Naples, obliged to humour the superstitious dread with which sailors regard the presence of a corpse on board ship, caused the body of this magnificent patron of sculpture to be packed and shipped as an antique statue.

The attempt here made to trace the career of the fourth Earl of Bristol more closely than it has hitherto been followed has not been undertaken merely because the eccentricity of his character gives piquancy to the record of his life and opinions, though in this respect few characters can offer a more interesting study in the contradictions of human nature. It has been mainly suggested by the belief that Lord Bristol's opinions on Irish affairs and his action in Irish politics have not hitherto been correctly represented. The elucidation of the views by which, notwithstanding many apparent inconsistencies, Lord Bristol appears to have been continuously guided illumines with fresh light the most fascinating chapter in the annals of the people to whose national vanity the Protestant and English Bishop of Derry ministered for a moment more acceptably than the greatest of Irish patriots, and the sources of whose opposition to the interests of his own country the inspiration that is sometimes joined to eccentricity enabled him to gauge more accurately than any other Englishman of his time.

## APPENDIX

THE following letters from or relating to the Bishop have not hitherto been printed. The originals of the three to Sir John Strange are in the Egerton MSS. at the British Museum, that of the fourth is in the Pelham Papers, and the last, addressed to Emma, Lady Hamilton, is in the possession of Lord Francis Hervey, by whose kind permission it is printed here. The replies of the Bishop to the Volunteer addresses appeared in the 'Dublin Evening Post' for 1784.

### I

#### *From the Earl of Bristol to Mr. Strange*

Rome: March 22, 1778.<sup>1</sup>

I am here in a terrestrial Paradise. The French courier is just arrived and all the letters breathe nothing but war. The few French officers here, and especially those belonging to the Irish regiment, set out immediately. By all that I can learn our

<sup>1</sup> Egerton MS. 2001.

ministers have not the least idea of their danger, yet I have authentick intelligence that the first impression will be made upon Ireland; that the Irish battalions will be employed in this attempt; that blank commissions are entrusted to several officers of the corps, who will disperse them amongst their relations. I know likewise that there is resumed the original idea of attempting a Coalition between the Papists and the Protestants of Ireland in order to declare an Independency under the protection of France and Spain. This was the private intention of the popish officers of the Irish Regiments in case M. Conflans' embarkation had succeeded, and I have reason to believe that nobody was privy to it but M. de Choiseul, two ladies, and a very few Irish officers of distinction, but these differed in opinion about the scheme. I leave you to make what you will of this without citing me.

## II

Rome: May 7, 1778.

My daughter is still in Paris, but I hope to persuade her to spend next winter with us in Rome. If the war with France begins, you may expect Ireland rather than America to be the scene of action, and a most bloody conflict it will be: the R. C. are stimulated from hence to avenge their long oppression and finally throw off the yoke. The general pretext for this intended revolt is the intolerable severity of our penal laws against R. C., by which they are not only prohibited from the legal exercise of their religion but are even denied effectual security for money they may lend to Protestants and compell'd to content themselves with a mere personal obligation which dies with the debtor or flies with his flight. It is scarcely credible, but is too true, that if a younger brother in that country, of a Popish family, is base enough to abjure his religion either from indifference or from lucre, he disinherits all his elder brothers, renders his father tenant for life, and after his death gets full possession of his estate. This Irish Code is the more extraordinary that it did not originate from the massacre of the Protestants in 1641, nor yet from the Protectorship of Cromwell, nor yet from the reign of that arch hypocrite Charles II., nor during the reign of the tolerant and liberal-minded William the Second, but under the reign of Queen Anne when Popery was quiet and harmless.

My wife seems determined not to go to the waters of Valdagno, but if you will receive me perhaps I may make the journey alone. The plot thickens about Ireland. I wish our Government were sufficiently on their guard, for I dread some very severe stroke.



## III

St. James's Square: August 18, 1782.<sup>1</sup>

My dear old friend,—I little thought of ever troubling you with the subject of politics: but a measure which I have had the good fortune to broach, and which has succeeded beyond expectation, encourages me: could you not purchase three or four ships of the line from the Venetian State? The money should be forthcoming at a moment's warning. The counties here have entered into a voluntary subscription to build, but in my opinion we could purchase cheaper and sooner; pray write me word if the thing is feasible and consistent with your duty. Adieu, my best regards and affection to Mrs. Strange.

*Note by Sir John Strange.*—Answered that the Venetians had no ships of the line to sell, and if they had they are too slight built to suit us; nor would they dare depart from their scrupulous neutrality to traffic in such a commodity.

## IV

*From Lord Cavan to the Rt. Hon. Thomas Pelham* <sup>2</sup>

Londonderry, May 27, '97.

Sir,—I have the honour to transcribe for your information an extract of a letter from Lord Bristol to Mr. Goldsburn, his resident agent here.

'Without entering into any parley or discussion of the illegal and violent manner in which his L'ship (meaning me) has taken possession of the mansion of a Peer of the Realm and a Bishop of the Diocese, I require him not only to quit it directly but also to repair any damage committed, in failure of which his Lordship is *my mark* for so unexampled an outrage, and Mr. Galbraith has my most positive and decided orders instantly to take up the matter legally, and vindicate the dilapidated property of an Irish subject.'

In another part of his Lordship's letter he blames his agent for not resisting, as he terms it, the insult I have committed, and says the Insurgents could not have done worse. By this latter observation his Lordship seems aware that Insurgents are in the country, surely therefore his quarrelling about his house at such a time as the present comes with a very bad grace from him. It has no effect on me. The Troops are still in it and more will shortly be, as soon as bedsteads can be made, unless I have official orders to the contrary. I take it for granted that you will support my proceedings on this subject. . . .

CAVAN, B.G.

To the Rt. Hon: Thos: Pelham.

<sup>1</sup> Egerton MS. 1970, f. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Add. MS. 33104, f. 130.

## V

*From the Earl of Bristol to Lady Hamilton*

*A son Excellence Miladi Hamilton à Palermo en Sicile*

28 March '99, Venice.

Hip! Hip! Hip! Huzza, Huzza, Huzza, for dearest Emma! Those doubly damn'd miscreants, first as French, secondly as *Rep*, have thrown *doublets*, and within these few days been Beat—ay, completely beaten twice.

General Lusignan arrived the night before last at the Golden Eagle at *Padua*, where I had been lounging away a month among Greek and Latin professors. The General, according to his age and dignity, had gone to bed tired, but I saw his aide-de-camp, who, like all others of his rank, preferred *supper* to sleep, just as my aides-de-camp, vulgarly called Chaplains, usually do after a journey of seventy or eighty miles.

This aide-de-camp speaking nothing but German, I summoned my Dragoman to interpret, and he told us he had met P. Charles' courier going to Vienna with intelligence that the French had attacked either the left or right wing—to us Bishops it matters as little as if it had been the wing of a fat Capon—that P. Charles had made a decisive manœuvre, cut off this left or right wing from the rest of the body and totally defeated it, so that it was repassing the Rhine. So much for Buckingham, as Richard says; but yesterday at nine o'clock in the morning, just as I was mounting my *Rosinante* to come off for Venice, arrives an officer full gallop from the army at Legnago, and proceeding to Vienna with an account that they had attacked and totally defeated the French army, taken 3,000 prisoners, who might better be called Deserters, and laid dead on the field 3,000 more, and were then in pursuit of the rest; and what is curious is that on that very day, being myself at Este, my servant cried out: 'Milord, the French and Austrians are at it, for I hear the cannonading,' and so indeed we did very distinctly. 1,700 Russians are now on this side Goritz, but I cannot learn with certainty whether they embark at Trieste for Ancona or proceed by land for Rovigo and Ferrara. God grant them success wheresoever they go.

In the meantime if you can get our dear invaluable Queen to give me a short introductory letter to P. Charles, I have matters of great moment and character of great importance to communicate to him. Of the three demi-brigades with which I made acquaintance during my nine month abode at Milan, there are not ten

privates who are not Royalist, and of the Gensd'Armes who guarded me night and day all the officers but one, a Mason by trade, and all the privates without exception, are zealous Royalists and execrate the Directory; and all these universally advise the carrying the war into the South of France and especially to carry Louis 18th with one of the armies, as above two thirds of the Rep army would go out to him. This was the general opinion and such was the sentiment of Col. Marion, Commandant de la Place at Ferrara, and now at Mantua—a native of La Lorraine Allemande. Sweet Emma, adieu. My direction is, 'Augsburg poste restante.'

The following is the inscription on the obelisk erected in the park at Ickworth to the memory of the Bishop:—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF

FREDEBICK, EARL OF BRISTOL, BISHOP OF DERRY, Etc.,

WHO DURING 35 YEARS THAT HE PRESIDED

OVER THAT SEE, ENDEARED HIMSELF

TO ALL DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANS

RESIDENT IN THAT EXTENSIVE DIOCESE.

HE WAS THE FRIEND AND PROTECTOR OF THEM ALL.

HIS GREAT PATRONAGE WAS

UNIFORMLY ADMINISTERED UPON THE PUREST AND

MOST DISINTERESTED PRINCIPLES.

VARIOUS AND IMPORTANT PUBLIC WORKS

WERE UNDERTAKEN AT HIS INSTIGATION,

AND COMPLETED BY HIS MUNIFICENCE;

AND HOSTILE SECTS WHICH HAD LONG ENTERTAINED

FEELINGS OF DEEP ANIMOSITY TOWARDS EACH OTHER

WERE GRADUALLY SOFTENED AND RECONCILED

BY HIS INFLUENCE AND EXAMPLE.

GRATEFUL FOR BENEFITS

WHICH THEY CAN NEVER FORGET,

THE INHABITANTS OF DERRY

HAVE ERECTED AT ICKWORTH

THIS DURABLE RECORD OF THEIR ATTACHMENT.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOP

AND THE DISSENTING MINISTER RESIDENT AT DERRY

WERE AMONG THOSE THAT CONTRIBUTED

TO THIS MONUMENT.

## III

*LORD CLARE*

THE charming illustration by which Plunket, in perhaps the most beautiful image that ever relieved the aridity of a legal argument, described the action of time in creating prescription, may be applied with equal point to the labours of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. 'Time,' said Plunket, 'is the great destroyer of evidence, but he is also the great protector of titles. He comes with a scythe in one hand to mow down the muniments of our possession, while he holds an hour-glass in the other from which he incessantly metes out the portions of duration that are to render the muniments no longer necessary.' As the fame of great names grows dim with the lapse of years, and as the stately figures of the past fade with the departure of their surviving contemporaries into the obscurity of the unknown, time as gradually removes the hindrances to the revelation of the secret motives, passions, or prejudices which have swayed the actions or governed the policy of statesmen, and permits the publication of those confidential documents which, written under cover of the utmost secrecy, become to the historian the most veracious of all memorials of the past, and enable him to 'people the hollow dark' with authentic images of the illustrious dead.

Of few men who have filled a large space in the world of their own day has the memory been more completely blotted out of the national recollection of his countrymen than that of John Fitzgibbon, Earl of Clare. No individual Irishman has ever exercised a greater direct authority over the affairs and fortunes of his native country than that which Clare wielded, or exerted a more enduring influence upon

her history. Yet his memory faded out with the departure of the generation which knew him, till scarce a trace remained of his once commanding personality. No contemporary ever essayed his biography, and the destruction, by his own direction, of all the personal and political correspondence in his possession at his death seemed to render it for ever impossible to learn more of his life than could be gathered from the bald and inadequate annals of his period. And as time passed on the growing obscurity of his fame was deepened by the removal of those visible memorials by which the present is anchored to the past. The title which he founded was extinguished, in the person of his grandson, in the Charge of Balaclava. His family estates passed from the possession of his descendants. The splendid mansion he dwelt in was dismantled, and all its contents dispersed. And with this destruction and dispersal have naturally perished the traditions which commonly survive among the descendants of a great man to keep his memory green.

No fulness of historical research can ever atone for such losses as these, or make it otherwise than difficult to play 'Old Mortality' to an epitaph so hopelessly erased and disfigured. But the gradual publication of the correspondence of contemporary statesmen, the patient investigations of eminent historians, and the abundant labours of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, have brought to light within recent years a very considerable number of Clare's letters, and have placed us in possession of much ampler materials for an estimate of his character and statesmanship than fifty years after his death seemed ever likely to be attainable. It is, therefore, no more than what historical justice demands that the fame of Lord Clare should be redeemed, in the light of fresh knowledge, from so much of the obloquy which has fallen on it as is thus proved to have been unmerited.

How great were Clare's abilities, how eminent his services, how large the space which he occupied in the eyes of his contemporaries, may be gathered from the scattered references which are to be found in the memoirs of his principal



political opponents. The pages of Sir Jonah Barrington's *Memoirs*, of the lives of Grattan, Flood, Curran, and other patriots of the day, bristle with parentheses of abuse which testify at once to the power which Clare wielded, and to the fear in which he was held. As Attorney-General from 1783 to 1789, and as Lord Chancellor from 1789 to 1802, his official career was practically conterminous with the era of Grattan's Parliament; and through the whole of that era he was undoubtedly the mainspring of the Castle policy. His was the brain which directed the Irish administration throughout a space of eighteen troubled years, his the vigour which aided to quench the flame of Irish insurrection, and his the counsel upon which, more than upon that of any other statesman, Pitt relied when he resolved on passing the Act of Union. In the words of Mr. Lecky, he was 'the great Father of the Union.' Yet until quite recent years the history of the Grattan Parliament has been told almost without the slightest reference to the most eminent advocate of Imperial rule who sat in it. While the names of all the popular leaders who played their parts in that brilliant epoch of Irish history have been made familiar to posterity in the pages of innumerable memoirs, and kept alive in the volumes of their speeches, no adequate biography of this illustrious Irishman has ever appeared.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, indeed, a fuller knowledge of Clare's career has led to a more just appreciation of his character. Froude, in his 'English in Ireland,' painted, with a few vivid touches of his picturesque brush, the picture of the statesman to whose large place in history he was the first to do justice, and whose bold, commanding personality and unswerving devotion to the interests of England struck the imagination of that imperialist historian. Mr. Lecky has given us, in colours less glowing, a conception of Clare's statesmanship, less sympathetic and more impartial. But in the pages of both historians it has necessarily happened that the figure of Clare has been seen mainly in

<sup>1</sup> O'Flanagan's *Lives of the Irish Chancellors* contains a lengthy and useful memoir of Lord Clare, but it can hardly rank as an effective biography.

those harsher attitudes which the statesman's position as the champion of authority and government in times of unexampled agitation obliged him to assume in the latter years of his career. Thus, while justice has been done to Clare's abilities, the impression given of his character has been, perhaps, too uniformly repellent and unlovable, and the very homage rendered to the power of his iron will has accentuated the sterner side of his nature. His head has been praised at the expense of his heart, and his statesmanship at that of his humanity. That is a price which few men would willingly pay for eminence; nor is it fitting that posthumous fame should be accompanied by so heavy a penalty unless it is unquestionably deserved.

To comprehend the part which Clare took in Irish politics, and to account for the peculiar animosity with which he came to be regarded by his opponents, it is necessary to recall his origin. His father was born of Roman Catholic parents in humble circumstances, and sprang from a sept long identified with the county Limerick and accounted among the most Irish of Irish families in religious and national sentiment. Originally designed for the priesthood, John Fitzgibbon the elder, after applying himself to medicine abroad for a time, had conformed to the Protestant faith, and, becoming a student at the Middle Temple, was ultimately called to the Irish Bar. There he practised for forty years, with success so extraordinary as to enable him to realise a fortune of over 100,000*l*. Although he never attained the Bench his professional eminence was remarkable, and he narrowly missed important promotion. In the brief vice-royalty of Lord Bristol he was designated for the high office of Chief Justice of the King's Bench on an expected vacancy, which, however, did not take place. His station in Parliament was one of equal consequence, though he was never in office, and in his latter years he was eulogised by Edmund Burke for the independence of his character and the liberality of his views.

To this shrewd, hard-headed, and highly successful old gentleman, who married a lady of good family in the south

of Ireland early in his professional career, was born a family of seven children. Of three sons John Fitzgibbon was the youngest. He was born in Dublin, probably in 1748, and was brought up at his father's residence at Donnybrook in the neighbourhood of Dublin. It is interesting to note that his rivalry with Henry Grattan dated from their boyhood, when the two great antagonists were schoolfellows. In 1763 he matriculated at Trinity College, where, as at school, he came closely into contact with Grattan; and a class distinguished for the number of able men it contained—Foster, the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons during the Union debates, was in the same year—was made remarkable by the keen competition which took place between the two young men, and in which Fitzgibbon, though considerably the junior of his rival, was usually the victor. Graduating in 1767, little trace of Fitzgibbon can be found in the five years which elapsed before his call to the Irish Bar in Trinity Term, 1772; but from entries in the books at Christ Church it would seem that, like his elder brother, Ion, he graduated at Oxford in 1770.

Statements, somewhat carelessly accepted, as to the habits of his early days represent Fitzgibbon as addicted to a life of pleasure, and giving but little thought to the serious business of life, until the death, in 1776, of his only surviving brother left him the sole heir to the handsome fortune which his father had realised, and opened up glowing possibilities of a great career. These statements cannot be accounted as altogether correct,<sup>1</sup> for it is certain that the young barrister

<sup>1</sup> The misconception appears to have originated in a passage in a letter of Edmund Malone, published in Prior's life of that writer, in which the following passage occurs: 'I met Fitzgibbon at Bath, on his way to Hotwells. His unparalleled effeminacy, I am now convinced, is unconquerable. Change of kingdoms has, I think, rather increased the unnatural delicacy of his manners. His *dishabillé* was not by any means remarkable, after a long journey from Oxford, but it gave him great concern that I should meet him in such an undress.' But this reference is not to John Fitzgibbon. It is certainly his elder brother, Ion, who is intended, for the future Chancellor was then barely seventeen, and was an undergraduate at Dublin. Froude, in a letter to the author, observes as to this point: 'I believe Fitzgibbon's private life to have been a simple one. Had it been stained by any vice, we should all have heard of it

applied himself with considerable vigour to the business of his profession from the very commencement. Extracts from his fee-book which have been published show that his earnings even from the first were substantial. The truth probably is that Fitzgibbon at that time applied himself with equal vigour to the pursuit of business and pleasure. He is described as having immense powers of endurance, and being equal to the most severe demands upon his energies.

Fitzgibbon's earliest efforts at the bar appear to have been made in election petitions, which in his time were often made the subject of keen party struggle, when argued in committee of the Irish House of Commons; and in the year 1777 he was successful in no fewer than four petitions. It was to his aptitude for work of this sort that he owed his first introduction to Parliament. The celebrated Provost Hely-Hutchinson, one of the ablest politicians of his time, had procured in 1776 the return of his son Richard, afterwards Lord Donoughmore, for the University of Dublin, in opposition to the Attorney-General, Philip Tisdal. A petition was brought, with the conduct of which Fitzgibbon was entrusted. After a long struggle Hutchinson was unseated by the committee; but Tisdal dying in the interval, and the successful party being thus left without a candidate, the young barrister was chosen in his place, and on March 28, 1778, was returned to the Irish Parliament to represent the University of Dublin. He was then barely thirty years of age.

From the foregoing brief summary of the circumstances of his early life, it will be seen that Fitzgibbon entered Parliament with admirable prospects, and the surest guarantees of political and professional success. Inheriting a large fortune, possessed of splendid abilities, a member of a profession which enjoyed immense influence in the Irish House of Commons, and gifted with a considerable degree

long ago, for no other public man ever had more bitter or unscrupulous antagonists.'--See a letter from Orde, the chief secretary to the Duke of Rutland, The Rutland Papers, *Historical MSS. Commission Reports*, vol. iii. p. 309.

of oratorical ability, he was plainly marked out for a conspicuous part in the animated scenes that were impending. He had not indeed the splendid rhetorical endowments which enabled Flood and Grattan to carry away the senators in a whirlwind of emotion, his manner being more incisive than persuasive; but he could speak with force, precision, and perspicacity.

At the moment when Fitzgibbon stepped upon the troubled stage of Irish politics, parties in Ireland, seldom constituted in those days upon any very intelligible principle, were in a state of almost unexampled flux. Little as the Parliament which Grattan was about to found corresponded in its constitutional working with the usages of the English House of Commons, the old dependent Parliament which it replaced was even further removed from the model of English political life. In Ireland the party system was scarcely, if at all, understood. There was, of course, a Government and an Opposition; but the Opposition could never displace the Government, which was an executive machine rather than a political organism. The Lord-Lieutenant, indeed, was identified directly with the party and the politics which, for the time being, held sway at Westminster. But though theoretically and constitutionally liable to dismissal at any moment at the hands of the Viceroy, the great officials, and especially the law officers of the Crown, enjoyed for a long series of years a practical fixity of tenure. The Chancellor was in effect appointed for life, but, being an Englishman, took no very decisive part in struggles which he only half understood, and usually confined himself to the discharge of his functions as Speaker of the Irish House of Lords, and to the exercise of the immense patronage which was vested in him. The Chief Secretary was often non-resident, and sometimes had not even a seat in the Irish House. Thus the chief administrative and political agent was the Attorney-General, to whom was confided the management of the House of Commons, and who usually held his post continuously, irrespective of the resignations of Viceroys or of the rise or fall of parties at Westminster,



until such time as he chose to retire to the haven of a Chief Justiceship. Opposition was in practice little more than a competition between a few great families for the favour of a Government which could always extricate itself from its parliamentary embarrassments by purchasing whichever of its opponents happened to be the most formidable for the time being.

When Fitzgibbon entered the House of Commons he found the Government party unusually feeble, and the various rivals who made up the motley Opposition by which it was confronted proportionately formidable. The death of old Philip Tisdal, who for seventeen years had conducted the business of government under no fewer than eight Lords-Lieutenant, had deprived administration of its most efficient instrument. His successor, John Scott, afterwards Lord Clonmell, though a man of great ability, was much too indolent to fill the post as Tisdal had filled it; and Lord Buckinghamshire, who had succeeded Earl Harcourt at Dublin Castle in 1777, found himself without any efficient agent in that system of management in which his predecessor had been a past-master.

Up to this Fitzgibbon had taken no decided part in politics, though he had acted in general with the Opposition; the sympathies of his constituency, which had elected as his colleague the eloquent Walter Hussey Burgh, being with the popular party, and his personal friendship with Grattan bringing him in contact mainly with members of the Opposition. When the Volunteers were formed he had himself taken his place as a private in their ranks; but he had confined his co-operation to the purely defensive military purposes in which that remarkable organisation had originated. He had quitted them the moment they assumed the shape of a party association, and had denounced in Parliament the attempt to turn them to political purposes.

It was his vigorous independence on this occasion that first commended Fitzgibbon to the friends of Government as a possible recruit. His connections had hitherto been mainly with the Opposition, with which his father,

who had sat for many years in Parliament, had usually sided, though in his latter years the force of family ties had brought the old lawyer into touch with influences friendly to Government. The great wealth he had amassed had enabled the elder Fitzgibbon to make considerable alliances for his daughters, one of whom had married a member of the great Beresford family, who subsequently became Archbishop of Tuam and founded the peerage of Decies. The connection had an important influence on the prospects of young Fitzgibbon by procuring him the friendship of John Beresford. This powerful personage, who for thirty years was on the most intimate footing with successive Viceroys, was a member of one of the most distinguished of Irish families. By his marriage with Barbara Montgomery, one of the bevy of sisters portrayed as the 'Three Graces' in Reynolds's well-known picture, he had become closely connected with Lord Townshend and other influential personages in England. The influence wielded by Beresford, who was described to Lord Fitzwilliam by an influential member of Opposition as 'the King of Ireland,' may be best measured by the single fact that the attempt to dismiss him from his post at the head of the Revenue had much to do with that nobleman's recall in 1795. The magnificence of his conceptions is still attested by the stately Custom House at Dublin, which was built at his suggestion.

Beresford was the first person connected with Government to discern Fitzgibbon's ability. As early as 1779 he had mentioned the young lawyer to Lord Buckinghamshire as a man whose support could be had upon honourable terms, and who would be prepared to take an active part in the debates of the House of Commons if encouraged to do so by the prospect of professional advancement. The Viceroy was at first favourably disposed to the proposal, and commissioned Scott, the Attorney-General, to negotiate with Fitzgibbon, who, after consulting with Beresford, agreed to the arrangement. But the young politician characteristically based his consent upon the terms 'that there should be a settled plan adopted, and a firm adherence to this plan, whatever it was,

so that when we had taken a part we might not be left alone and betrayed.' But the vacillation of Heron, the Chief Secretary, violated these terms on the very first occasion on which the new plan was put to the proof, and Fitzgibbon, withdrawing his support, remained in opposition, though in doing so he intimated his readiness to support Ministers if they had the courage to undertake a definite policy. But Lord Buckinghamshire taking offence at the independence he had shown, the negotiation came to an end.

The resignation of Lord Buckinghamshire and the advent of the Carlisle administration had, indirectly, an important influence on Fitzgibbon's future, by procuring him the intimate friendship, which was continued to the close of his life, of William Eden, afterwards the first Lord Auckland, a statesman who, though at that time so far connected with the Whigs as to be included in the ill-starred Coalition ministry, was subsequently among the most thoroughgoing of the colleagues of Pitt. To Eden, as the Chief Secretary of a Government desirous of enlarging the basis of its connections in the Irish House of Commons, Fitzgibbon was soon introduced by Beresford, and the two men formed a friendship the value of which was more than once felt by the young Irishman on critical occasions in his career. As early as 1782 Eden warmly recommended his friend for the important office of Prime Serjeant, and though he had left Ireland before Fitzgibbon received his first official appointment it was in no small degree to his influence that his friend's selection as Attorney-General was due. Almost the only intimate letters of Lord Clare which have been preserved, with the exception of a few published in the Beresford Correspondence, are to be found among the Auckland Papers. They show that a very warm intercourse was maintained between the two men down to the death of Clare, about whose health during his last illness Auckland displayed an obviously sincere and affectionate solicitude.

In the events which culminated in the legislative independence of the Irish Parliament, Fitzgibbon took only a very subordinate part, and though he concurred generally in

the measures which led up to that concession his approval seems to have gone little further than a passive and scarcely convinced acquiescence in the wishes of his constituents. In 1780 he declined to support Grattan's Declaration of Right. In language which curiously anticipates some of the arguments used twenty years later in his masterly speech on the Union, he reminded the House of Commons that they could not disavow the authority of British statutes without shaking the security upon which the title to vast numbers of Irish estates depended. And he indicated that contempt for popular clamour and dislike of agitation which marked every stage of his subsequent career by declining 'to be terrified by an armed people crowding to the bar.' But though it is pretty evident that his support would not have been withheld from a firm opposition to the demands of the Volunteers, Fitzgibbon was too prudent to wreck his career by exhibiting an irreconcilable hostility to the popular demand in the face of the resolution of the English Government to concede it. Accordingly, when called on by his constituents in 1782 to vote for Grattan's Declaration he frankly yielded his opinion to theirs, while avowing his 'decided conviction' that it 'was a measure of dangerous tendency, and withal inadequate to the purpose for which it is intended.' And he added his hope that a total repeal of Poynings's Law would not be pressed by his constituents.

But, though thus acquiescing in the views of his supporters, it is certain that Fitzgibbon never caught the contagion of the popular enthusiasm which swayed Grattan and his friends. At the elections of 1783 his imperfect sympathy with the national aspirations cost him his seat for the University. But he still retained the friendship and confidence of Grattan and his principal associates; and it was with their full concurrence that Fitzgibbon was in the autumn of that year designated as Attorney-General. It is curious to reflect that the man who is best remembered for the vehemence of his opposition to Irish popular demands, who was for seventeen years the colleague of Pitt and the principal instrument of his Irish policy, and who more than

any other individual contributed to the destruction of the Grattan Parliament, was first appointed to office by the Viceroy of a ministry of which Fox was the head and Burke a subordinate member, and with the explicit approval of Grattan.<sup>1</sup> It was, indeed, largely the friendliness of the latter, coupled with the recommendations strenuously pressed by Lord Auckland, that won the prize for Fitzgibbon, who thus found himself elevated to the most influential office open to his profession, short of the Seals for which an Irishman was then considered ineligible, at the early age of thirty-six. But though it sounds strange that one who was for so many years to be identified with an anti-Irish policy in its severest forms should have won his first promotion under the ministry of Charles Fox, the truth is that at the time of his appointment the English Whigs were under the influence of the reaction which has not unusually followed their concessions to Ireland; and, alarmed at the results of their policy in establishing an independent parliament, they were ready to rush to the opposite extreme of coercion. The agitation led by Flood and the Bishop of Derry in the autumn of 1783 had filled all parties in England with an alarm which was not diminished, so far as responsible ministers were concerned, by the weakness of Lord Northington's Government. In a remarkable letter from the Prime Minister to the Viceroy dated November 1, 1783, and printed in Grattan's *Life*, Fox counselled his lieutenant to firmer action, affirming that unless the Volunteers were dissolved within a reasonable time 'government, and even the name of it, must be at an end.' In the same communication Fox stated with great clearness his views on Irish policy, laying down the doctrine of finality in concession in the most definite terms:— 'Immense concessions were made in the Duke of Portland's

<sup>1</sup> 'Many of your friends, you say, have disapproved of the proposed arrangements for Scott and Fitzgibbon. Are they of this or your side of the water? If on my side, I can contradict it thus far—Grattan was consulted, and was content to act with Fitzgibbon. The Attorney-General (Yelverton) likewise approves of Fitzgibbon. He stands foremost in rank, abilities, and personal knowledge. It is proposed he should take the lead in the House of Commons.' Northington to Fox, November 18, 1783. *Grattan's Life*, iii. 134.



time, and these concessions were declared by an almost unanimous House of Commons to be sufficient. The account must be considered as having been closed on the day of that vote, and should never again be opened upon any pretence whatever.' <sup>1</sup>

Even the most careful of historians have fallen into the error of representing Lord Clare as having been, through the whole of his official career, in violent antagonism to the popular party. But this view is entirely erroneous. Fitzgibbon's first years in Parliament were passed, as we have seen, in opposition, and his acceptance of the Constitution of 1782 was frank and unreserved. With the Opposition leaders he remained for many years on a friendly and even cordial footing. In the letter to his constituents of Dublin University, already referred to, he had explicitly stated his opinion that 'the claims of the British Parliament to make laws for this country is a daring usurpation of the rights of a free people,' and that he had uniformly asserted this opinion in public and private. There does not seem to be any ground for questioning the sincerity of this declaration, nor is it indeed in any sense incompatible with his subsequent advocacy of a union, when the United Irish movement threatened the dissolution of the connection between Great

<sup>1</sup> Further on in the same letter Fox enlarges on this theme, and his remarks throw a curious light on the views of the section of the Whig party with which Grattan was then in closest harmony: 'I hope, my dear Northington, you will not consider this long letter as meant to blame your conduct, but I think I owe it as much to my friendship for you as to the public to give you fairly my opinion and advice in your most arduous situation; and I will fairly own that there is one principle which seems to me to run through your different despatches which a little alarms me. It is this—you seem to think as if it were absolutely necessary at the outset of your government to do something that may appear to be obtaining *boons*, however trifling, to Ireland; and what I confess I like still less is to see that this is in some degree founded upon the ampleness of former concessions. Now I see this in quite a different light, and reason that because these concessions were so ample, no further ones are necessary. Because the Duke of Portland gave much, are you to give something? Consider how this reasoning will apply to your successor. I repeat it again, the account must be considered as closed in 1782. Ireland has no right to expect from any Lord-Lieutenant to carry any more points for her. Convenient and proper regulations will always be adopted for their own sakes; but *boons*, *gifts*, and *compliments*, Ireland has no right to expect.'—*Grattan's Life*, iii. 111.

Britain and Ireland—a connection he had always asserted to be indispensable, and his jealousy for which had even led him, as we have already seen, to deprecate the total repeal of Poynings's Law. Long prior to the Union, and before that measure had been thought of, he stated, in the debates on the Regency question, the view of the connection with Great Britain which he seems to have steadily held throughout his career: 'The only security for your liberty is your connection with Great Britain, and gentlemen who risk breaking the connection must make up their minds to a union. God forbid that I should ever see that day! but if ever the day on which a separation shall be attempted may come I shall not hesitate to embrace a union rather than a separation.' Within four years of this utterance the Franchise Act of 1793 and the proceedings of the United Irishmen had brought the dreaded day within measurable distance, and thenceforward, as he avowed in 1800, Clare never hesitated as to the expedient which policy rather than inclination must compel him to embrace.

The personal intimacy with Grattan continued unbroken down to 1790, and was then dissolved as much through Grattan's vehemence as Fitzgibbon's acerbity. Grattan's sudden leap to fame in 1782, so far from rousing the envy, seems to have attracted the genuine admiration of his quondam comrade. Nor does this feeling appear to have been alienated by the early encounters which necessarily took place on the floor of the House of Commons in the skirmishes between Government and Opposition. In the course of an animated reprobation of the violences of the Volunteers, after that body had passed under the control of Flood, Charlemont, and Lord Bristol, Fitzgibbon took occasion to pay an eloquent tribute to the patriotic services of his old friend, whom he eulogised as 'the man whose wisdom and virtues had directed the happy circumstances of the times and the spirit of Irishmen to make us a nation.' Clare's character has been nowhere more acrimoniously condemned than in the *Life of Grattan*, by his son; yet the author of that work expressly states that, as late as 1790,

and notwithstanding the heated struggles over the Regency Bill of 1789, the two statesmen were on good terms, and that their friendship was first broken by the violence of a pamphlet written by Grattan, in the course of which he used expressions which, as even the biographer of the latter admits, 'it was not kind of him, in a personal point of view,' to make use of.<sup>1</sup>

Fitzgibbon's promotion *per saltum* to the Attorney-Generalship, without serving in the subordinate office of Solicitor-General, took place at a moment of singular anxiety to the Irish Government, and, indeed, the urgency of securing the services of a really strong man had much to do with Lord Northington's final choice in the selection of a law officer. The Volunteer movement had revived in a very dangerous form, and in the hands of Flood and Lord Bristol was being made the instrument of an agitation for Parliamentary Reform which not only went far beyond what Fox in England or Grattan in Ireland deemed either safe or expedient, but was an actual menace to the stability of the British connection. On the introduction of Flood's Reform Bill all parties had concurred in refuting proposals brought in with all the unconstitutional menace of an armed assembly, and Government took the strong course of refusing leave to bring in the Bill, on the ground taken up by Fitzgibbon in 1780 in reference to the Declaration of Right—that the petition originated in an unconstitutional and illegal assembly, designed to awe and control the legislature. Fitzgibbon, who had already been designated as Attorney-General, spoke with great vigour on this occasion, and, according to Northington's report to Fox, 'acquitted himself astonishingly.' His actual appointment followed almost immediately; but upon the very day on which his patent was made out the ministry of Fox and Lord North was abruptly terminated, and Lord Northington was immediately replaced by Pitt's intimate friend, the fourth Duke of Rutland.

His tenure of the Attorney-Generalship, which he held for close on six years, though not the period of his greatest

<sup>1</sup> *Grattan's Life*, vol. iii. p. 400.

power, was probably the happiest portion of Fitzgibbon's career. He entered upon his official functions in the prime of life. Possessing the fullest confidence of his superiors, and without a rival on the ministerial benches in the House of Commons, he speedily became the first Irishman in the country and the chief inspiration of all the acts of the executive. Nor, as has been seen, was his enjoyment of the dignity and authority of his responsible position at this time marred by that hostility on the part of his political opponents which was so marked in the later stages of his career. His vigorous action, Cromwellian in its contemptuous imperiousness, at the very outset of his official career, in stifling the Reform agitation sought to be revived in the autumn of 1784, by dissolving, by the direct exertion of his personal intervention, a meeting called by the sheriffs of Dublin,<sup>1</sup> was approved by Grattan and the respectable section of the Whigs almost as cordially as it was endorsed by the Government; and, although in the warmth of debate his characteristic petulance sometimes involved him in altercations with individual opponents, he preserved for the most part the friendliest relations with the principal members of the Opposition.

With Curran, indeed, though the intercourse of the two men at the bar had at one time been friendly—Fitzgibbon, on the occasion of his taking silk, presented his brief-bag to his junior—the heat of controversy soon developed a serious quarrel, which culminated in a duel. Various accounts have been given of the encounter. Probably the most reliable is that given by Woodfall, the eminent parliamentary reporter,

<sup>1</sup> This incident is thoroughly characteristic of Fitzgibbon's fearless firmness and of the prompt decision with which he invariably acted. A meeting of the people of Dublin had been convened by the city sheriffs for the election of delegates to the National Convention summoned in this year. The authorities considered it dangerous. Fitzgibbon, almost unattended, forced his way through a hostile mob, got on the platform, cut short the harangue of a popular orator, told the sheriffs the meeting was illegal, and threatened them with severe legal penalties if they dared to disobey. The meeting dispersed, and Fitzgibbon, having effected his purpose, walked away with composure, quite undisturbed by the hisses of the mob. The comment on this episode by one of Clare's latest successors in his great office marks the change of times. 'Think of a law officer of to-day,' says Lord Ashbourne in his book on Pitt taking an active, personal, police part in asserting his view of the law !'



who, in a letter to Eden describing the famous debate on the commercial resolutions, while acknowledging the extent of the provocation offered by Curran, censured in strong terms Fitzgibbon's want of command over his temper. Eden appears to have remonstrated with his friend in a friendly spirit, and Fitzgibbon excused his violence on the plea that he had been accused of a lack of personal courage, and was thus driven to fight the duel.<sup>1</sup> The two men were never afterwards upon terms of friendship. Curran asserted that in later years the Chancellor visited upon the lawyer the offences of the politician, and evinced his dislike to an extent which prevented Curran from practising in his court. This is probably true; but it is true also that the insults which Curran's impetuosity led him to address to the Chancellor passed all the bounds of forensic decency, and were couched, if correctly reported, in language which no modern judge would tolerate for an instant.

Fitzgibbon at this period does not seem to have dreamt of the eminence to which he was to attain within a very few years. He had no ambition for any judicial honours short of the Chief Justiceship of Ireland, and the Chancellorship was apparently placed beyond his reach by the maxim of Government which had obtained during a long succession of years, and to which Pitt was inclined to adhere—that no Irishman should be allowed to hold the Seals.<sup>2</sup> Early in

<sup>1</sup> Fitzgibbon's own account of the affair, as conveyed in a letter to Eden, is as follows: 'My dear Eden,—Be assured that I never can doubt the warmth of your friendship for me, and that no man prizes it more highly than I do. The fact is that many of the gentlemen who compose our Opposition here, having in the course of the session thought fit to exercise their talents for abuse upon me, not perhaps with all the success with which they had flattered themselves seemed inclined to make a different experiment upon me. You know the genius of my countrymen well enough to see that, in my situation, it became inevitably necessary to undeceive them in this particular; and Mr. Curran having in so many words stated "that I was prone to give offence and prone to deprecate it," I sent Ogle to him to desire that he would disclaim the words, or give me an opportunity to convince him of his error. After taking twelve hours to consider of my proposal, during which time there were divers consultations of the leaders of the party upon the subject, they determined that he should fight: and, after I had received his fire and returned it, the young gentleman thought good to acknowledge that he had been mistaken, and we parted.'—August 29, 1785. *Auckland MS.*

<sup>2</sup> A letter from John Beresford throws a curious light on the reasons for this



1786 he expressed, in a letter to Eden on the occasion of an anticipated vacancy in the Chief Justiceship of the Common Pleas, his desire to remain Attorney-General, 'not feeling any inclination, as yet, to become an old woman,' although a few months later a possible opening in the higher office of Chief Justice of the King's Bench tempted him to convey to the Duke of Rutland his wish for that position. The Viceroy would have been greatly embarrassed by the change, and said as much in a letter to his Chief Secretary Orde, adding that in his opinion it would be for the interest of the Government that Fitzgibbon should be Chancellor upon any vacancy in that office. 'I should feel it very unpleasant,' he told Orde, 'to see him superseded by an English Chancellor, and I sincerely hope that there is no probability of any event to open that situation till the objection of his too much youth could be done away with.'<sup>2</sup> Orde concurred in the high opinion entertained by the Viceroy of Fitzgibbon's merit, suggesting that in the event of a premature vacancy a stopgap Chancellor might be provided from England, with an assurance of the succession to the Attorney-General—an expedient which seems to have found favour with Pitt. But this would not satisfy Fitzgibbon's viceregal champion, who at once replied, 'I could not with satisfaction see Fitzgibbon's pretensions even postponed. I love the man. He has stood by me and I must stand by him.' And the Viceroy's final words on the subject, in conveying his refusal to ask Lord Lifford to resign, with the object above mentioned, were, 'I cannot sacrifice Fitzgibbon. He

view:—'The office of Chancellor is the only one which it is absolutely necessary for England to keep in her own hands, and which it is most highly for the interest of this country (Ireland) should not get into the hands of an Irishman, and particularly of an Irishman attached to any particular party. Let his conduct be what it might, the public would never be contented with it; the idea revolts the people of this country; and I do assure you that I remember well when Lord Bowes died that the alarm was general lest any of the Irish candidates should succeed; and when the present man came over, and the disappointed candidates endeavoured to raise a combination against him, he was immediately taken up by the public, for no other reason than that he was an Englishman, from whom they expected impartiality.'—Beresford Correspondence.

<sup>1</sup> The Rutland Papers: *Historical MSS. Commission*, 14th Report, App. part i. p. 308.

deserves all I can give him, and I shall fling every obstacle in the way of any arrangement which is to preclude him.'

The sudden death of the Duke of Rutland, in the autumn of 1787, deprived Fitzgibbon of a friend, whose loss, had the Attorney-General been a weaker man, might have seriously affected his prospects, for the Duke had a weight with Pitt which his successor, Buckingham, never possessed. But the new Viceroy was quickly impressed with the capacity of the Attorney-General, and soon learned to rely upon Fitzgibbon as absolutely as his predecessor had done. And although Buckingham came to Ireland strongly possessed with the notion of the ineligibility of an Irishman for the Chancellorship, and had stated this view strongly to Pitt in a letter written prior to his appointment, he had not been six months in Ireland before he had not only pledged himself to support Fitzgibbon's claims, if an Irishman should be selected, but had expressed to William Grenville the opinion that, however strong the abstract arguments in favour of an English Chancellor, the time had gone by when Fitzgibbon's claims could be successfully opposed. In a few words the Viceroy painted a striking picture of his masterful subordinate—'his intrepidity, his influence and weight, have, in fact, placed him at the head of the country. We all fear him; and on all occasions I have found him fair, manly, and to be trusted.'<sup>1</sup>

Lord Lifford's retirement was at this time believed to be imminent, and, in point of fact, the old Chancellor was only postponing resignation until he should have negotiated favourable terms, in the shape either of a pension or of a provision for his sons. In the autumn of 1788, he definitely expressed to Buckingham his desire to retire, and Fitzgibbon had thereupon betaken himself to London, where he had received from Pitt himself an undertaking that no appointment should be made without giving him a fair opportunity of stating his claims, and had met, at the hands of the English Chancellor, Lord Thurlow, a reception so

<sup>1</sup> The Dropmore Papers: *Historical MSS. Commission*, 13th Report, App. part iii. p. 332.

flattering as led him to believe that he would meet with no opposition in that quarter, though this impression was subsequently proved to be erroneous. Amongst other well-wishers and backers of his candidature was the Earl of Mornington, afterwards the Marquess Wellesley, whose intimacy with Pitt made his support of much consequence. The Attorney-General had recently placed Mornington under a considerable obligation, and the Earl conveyed through Grenville his hope that his friend's application would meet with no inconsiderate refusal. Mornington was identified in the main at this period, as in later life, with the Whig connection; and the approval of Fitzgibbon's candidature by one who looked on Grattan as 'the first of all men in ability and virtue' is an additional proof that, down to his elevation to the Chancellorship, Clare had not alienated the regard of the Opposition in Ireland, in spite of the unmeasured and caustic language in which he assailed his opponents and enforced his opinions, language which led to his receiving in the squibs and lampoons of the day the nickname of FitzPetulant. The Opposition view of him during his Attorney-Generalship was, indeed, felicitously expressed in a speech of Grattan's, in which personal goodwill has still the upper hand of political hostility—'What has fallen from the right honourable member,' he said, 'is a proof that a certain asperity is not inconsistent with an excellent head and a very good heart.'

The strong pressure exerted by the Viceroy and others of Fitzgibbon's friends prevailed with Pitt against the solicitations of Camden and Thurlow, though the Premier evaded the necessity of definitely deciding between the rival influences by requesting Lord Lifford to remain in his post, which the old Chancellor retained until his death a year later. By the time that event occurred Fitzgibbon's staunch support of Pitt and Buckingham on the Regency question made it impossible to put any other candidate in competition with him for the Seals. The Viceroy's gratitude knew no bounds, and in letter after letter he testified to his sense of his lieutenant's services. 'Fitzgibbon,' he wrote, 'has assisted me in all these anxious moments with an exertion,

zeal, and even personal risk, beyond any line of common attachment. . . . I cannot conceive any possibility of putting by such pretensions.' In another letter he testified to 'the faculties, integrity, and situation which enable him to do more for English government than all Westminster Hall put together.'<sup>1</sup>

The chief obstacle in the path of Fitzgibbon's ambition was the English Chancellor, Lord Thurlow, who, supported by his predecessor Lord Camden, still held out against the appointment of an Irishman, and suggested every possible alternative. But Buckingham was resolute. He told Pitt, in plain terms, that Fitzgibbon would not remain in office if he were insulted by being passed over for any of the unknown men put forward by the Chancellor, and that he himself would not remain in Ireland without Fitzgibbon. He protested against Thurlow deciding the matter from the point of view of the law only, pointing out that a strong man who knew Ireland had become indispensable as Speaker of the House of Lords, and meeting Thurlow's objection that Fitzgibbon was unpopular in Ireland with the statement that it was 'absolute nonsense.' Ultimately Thurlow's opposition was withdrawn through the instrumentality of Hobart, the Irish Secretary and afterwards Lord Buckinghamshire, whom the Lord-Lieutenant sent over to tell Pitt in so many words that if Fitzgibbon were not appointed neither he nor any other member of the Irish Government would remain in office. Hobart was sent by Pitt to the Chancellor, who, according to the emissary, stormed and roared; but when he found the ministers firm, gave way, saying, 'If Mr. Pitt will appoint an Irishman Chancellor, Mr. Fitzgibbon is the best man he could select.'

The appointment was received in Ireland with a cordiality which is of itself sufficient to prove that no part, of the unpopularity which marked his declining years had yet been experienced by Fitzgibbon. Strange as it now appears in the light of the new Chancellor's subsequent career, no more popular appointment was ever made in Ireland. The

<sup>1</sup> The Dropmore Papers : *Historical MSS. Commission*, 13th Report, App. part iii. p. 446.

surrender by the English Government of the old prejudice which had prevented successive ministries from entrusting the Great Seal of Ireland to a native of the country, was viewed by all parties as a national triumph, and not least so by the Opposition. The new Chancellor was presented with the freedom of several of the chief cities, and for some weeks it rained addresses. Even in the heat of the struggle over the regency, in which Fitzgibbon had stood alone against an unprecedented combination, the normal strength of the opponents of Government being increased by the numerous trimmers who were ready to worship what they imagined to be the rising sun, he had avoided giving personal offence to the leaders of the Opposition. And when the recovery of the king made it necessary for them to make their peace with the Government they had defied, it was through Fitzgibbon that the negotiations were opened.

Nor were the lively expectations formed on all hands of Fitzgibbon's capacity and fitness for the great post to which he had thus early attained in any wise disappointed in the early years of his Chancellorship. In the discharge of the purely legal part of his functions he gave entire satisfaction. Displaying the utmost assiduity and attention to his business, he disposed of the causes which came before him with a promptitude which gratified the litigants and a judicial acumen which commanded the respect of the legal profession. Of those who have condemned Fitzgibbon as a violent bigot and prejudiced partisan, prone to support authority and privilege against popular rights irrespective of the dictates of justice, few, if any, have ever been at the pains to inquire how far this character tallies with what is recorded of Lord Clare's judicial career. Yet an examination of his reported judgments, many of which are extant in the pages of Ridgway's 'House of Lords Reports,' and elsewhere, abundantly proves not only the strength of his legal intellect but the breadth and liberality which constantly led him to take the most generous, most humane, and most tolerant view open to him. A candid perusal of his judicial remains presents indisputably the figure of a powerful judge



who, but for the engrossing political pre-occupations of his latter years, would probably have been a very great one. And in the two great causes of disunion which have most divided Irishmen, the divisions between Protestant and Catholic, between landlord and tenant, Clare's decisions will be found to lean, as far as the law permitted, to the liberal and popular side.

In the judgments which survive are displayed in a striking and even unusual degree a sincere and deep reverence for the great luminaries of English jurisprudence who went before him, coupled with the boldest independence towards their dogmas when these appeared to him to be unsupported by principle. In all are manifest that first and last of judicial characteristics—a strong will to do justice according to the merits of the case before him. Clare had that immense advantage to an equity judge, a complete practical grounding in the Common Law, and his mind was amply stored from the great treasuries of our traditional law. His capacity for work was immense, and his judgments are as conscientious and thorough in their elucidation of the facts as they are clear and courageous in their application of the law. In Clare's time causes, ere they reached the Lords, had usually to be carried through well-nigh impassable bogs of litigation. Through these the Chancellor's luminous judgments followed them step by step, never failing to find sure ground for his tread. He is never content, as some strong judges are, to decide upon one or two salient points, putting the rest aside, nor, as lazy or timid judges are sometimes known to be, is he satisfied to ride off upon some technicality, whereby he may evade the trouble and responsibility of a complete and courageous judgment. Yet this laborious industry is never the result of incapacity to grasp the relative importance of the difficulties involved in the facts; for he never falters in the masterful confidence of his opinion. As little was it due to any love of the usages of the law, for Clare had a horror quite before his time of the harrowing protractedness and expense of litigation, which, indeed, he never failed to

denounce and counteract as far as in him lay. The sarcastic and sometimes fierce animadversions which often occur in his judgments upon the flagitious prolonging of litigation, his unstinted denunciation of those cumbrous evasions of the old Chancery procedures which made the law's delay a by-word, not merely evince a healthy sympathy with justice, but give warrant for believing that, had he lived to the less fevered times which followed the Union, the name of Lord Clare would have stood high on the roll of law reformers; that many of the changes delayed for more than a generation after he had passed away would have been inaugurated through his influence at the opening of the century; and that the scandals typified in Jarndyce and Jarndyce would never have survived long enough to leave it to the author of 'Bleak House' to become a factor in the reformation of the Court of Chancery.

The break-up of Fitzgibbon's friendly relations with his old friends of the Whig Opposition dates from the formation, in 1789, of the Whig Club. One of the first acts of this body was to attack the Chancellor, who, in a dispute about the election to the Mayoralty of Dublin, had espoused the cause of the Corporation as against the popular wishes, and had, as the President of the Privy Council, delivered a decision which Charlemont described as 'by far the worst of all the wicked transactions he had known.' The Club having met and passed a series of resolutions on the subject, Fitzgibbon took occasion, in his place in the House of Lords, to express in the most candid terms his opinion of the Club and its members. He denounced them with his customary virulence of language, as persons of the grossest ignorance who, by their late resolution on behalf of the rights of the subject, had discovered 'as great a perversion of sense as ever distracted the human brain;' and he did not scruple to describe a body which numbered among its roll such magnates as the Duke of Leinster and Lord Charlemont as 'a porter club, a horde of miscreant traitors professing peace but practising corruption.' Grattan replied in a pamphlet which contained references to the

Chancellor so galling as to terminate their acquaintance, and except for such formal intercourse as must have taken place at the meetings of the Privy Council attended by Grattan during Fitzwilliam's viceroyalty, the two men never spoke again.

Thenceforward the story of Fitzgibbon's career is the story of that stormiest decade in Irish history which, after witnessing the rise and fall of the United Irishmen and the horrors of a civil war, was to terminate in the Union which he did more than any single individual to accomplish. From the first beginnings of the United Irish agitation Fitzgibbon set himself resolutely to fight it. He was at no time under any illusion as to the dangerous possibilities which lurked beneath the surface of Irish society, and, knowing his country and his countrymen, he had discerned the dangers which threatened in the encouragement given by a factious Opposition to the latent disaffection which he knew existed among the people. Writing to Eden within a few months of the excitement over the regency, he laid his finger on the evil which arose from it: 'I hope that the gentlemen who are in opposition in Great Britain will learn, before it is too late, the danger of playing their game in this country. If they do not agree with their antagonists in anything else, they must learn to agree in supporting the King's Government in Ireland, else perhaps they may, before they are aware of it, have this country a stake to fight for with a foreign enemy.' The resignation of Buckingham, who had taken an active and direct part in the business of administration, within a few months of Fitzgibbon's elevation to the woolsack, by placing the nominal direction of affairs in the hands of a nobleman with no previous experience of Ireland, greatly strengthened Fitzgibbon's already great authority, and for the next ten years it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the powers of the Irish Government were concentrated in the Chancellor.

We have traced Lord Clare's career from its commencement to the zenith of his power. To follow it through the last and most stirring chapter of his contentious life

would be to write the history of the United Irish movement, of the Rebellion, and of the Union. His large share in those great transactions of that epoch has been clearly outlined in the 'English in Ireland' and in the 'History of England in the Eighteenth Century,' and need not be dwelt on here. But it is worth while to notice some incidents not elsewhere enlarged upon in Clare's personal relations both with his political superiors and with the leaders of the revolutionary agitation, and in his conduct of the struggle against them, which strikingly illustrate his character and illuminate his policy.

No episode in Irish history has been the subject of more vehement controversy or more abundant criticism than the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam from his brief and unfortunate viceroyalty. At the time it took place the incident strained almost to breaking point the lately formed coalition between Pitt and the Portland Whigs, upon which depended the whole policy of England in the struggle with France. And even after the lapse of above a century the passions it engendered can still lend warmth to the pen of the coolest of historians, and inspire the most vigorous passages in the criticisms of the most moderate and most detached of statesmen. The whole question of the justice of Pitt's action in summarily recalling Fitzwilliam has been so recently and so fully investigated from the point of view of Cabinet precedent and official propriety, by Lord Rosebery and Lord Ashbourne, that it is unnecessary to restate it here, though it is impossible to refer to the subject without observing that the significance of the recall has been very greatly exaggerated. It was certainly not the proximate cause of the Rebellion. Had it been so, many of the arguments used in justification of the Rebellion must disappear. The recall was, no doubt, in Lord Rosebery's phrase, 'a landmark.' It pointed the pause in that policy of concession which had culminated in the Franchise Act of 1793, and which had encouraged extravagant expectations in the popular mind; but it was not the occasion of that pause. The publication by Lord Ashbourne of the Cabinet Memo-

randum drawn up by Pitt and concurred in by Fitzwilliam's most particular friends and colleagues—Portland, Spencer, Windham, and Loughborough—disposes, once for all, of all controversy on that aspect of the question, and fully justifies the censure which Lord Rosebery has pronounced, with all the authority of one who has held the Premiership, on Fitzwilliam's extraordinary disregard of arrangements definitely sanctioned and prescribed by the Cabinet, and of pledges most explicitly entered into. That document entirely destroys the case for Lord Fitzwilliam, convicting the Viceroy not merely of weakness and indiscretion, but of actual bad faith; for it proves that every one of those acts of his viceroyalty which led to Fitzwilliam's recall, and in regard to which he claimed to have been given complete liberty of action by his colleagues, had been expressly repudiated by the Cabinet in advance, with Fitzwilliam's express assent.

But we are here concerned with the much-vexed episode only as it concerned Lord Clare. It is plain that the Chancellor was an important factor in the situation to be dealt with in Ireland at the moment when Fitzwilliam was appointed to the viceroyalty. The Chancellor had, as has been seen, by this time entirely lost the confidence of the leaders of the popular party in Ireland. They were resolved to procure his removal at the first opportunity, and the very first item in the programme they submitted to Fitzwilliam, who from the moment his appointment was decided on had placed himself absolutely in the hands of Grattan and his friends the Ponsonbys, was the dismissal of the Chancellor, whom it was intended to replace by an English serjeant-at-law of no particular eminence. As early as the autumn of 1794, several months before Fitzwilliam arrived in Ireland, this step had been definitely decided on in secret conclave. Had the Viceroy and his allies behaved with the commonest discretion, it is impossible to say how far the intrigue might have succeeded. But their designs were soon bruited abroad, and Fitzgibbon was not the man to sit still under such an attack. If in the course of his administration he had made enemies, he also had powerful



friends. And though Pitt was far from sharing his strong anti-Catholic views, Fitzgibbon was the Premier's most trusted adviser in Irish affairs, and he possessed his ear. Accordingly it was soon evident that the Chancellor was much more likely to dismiss the Viceroy than the Viceroy to dismiss the Chancellor. Fitzwilliam's intention was brought to the knowledge of the Cabinet, when Pitt emphatically declined to assent to any interference with Fitzgibbon, or to the removal of any of the old servants of the Government. And in the subsequent arrangement, in which, as detailed in the Memorandum, every nomination to office in Ireland was specifically dealt with, the retention of Fitzgibbon in his post remained a *sine quâ non*. Foiled in their principal object, the new dispensers of power and patronage did their best, while turning their attention to smaller men, to make the position of the Chancellor and his immediate friends as unpleasant as possible; and it was not wonderful that Fitzgibbon, on his side, should seize the earliest opportunity to be revenged on his assailants. Such an opportunity the unwisdom of his adversaries speedily presented. Fitzwilliam had no sooner arrived in Ireland than he entered upon a career of proscription, and one of his first acts was to dismiss Beresford from his post in the Revenue. Beresford was not only Fitzgibbon's closest ally in the Irish Government, but from his connections, influence, and great ability in council he had become one of the most powerful men in Ireland. His dismissal was, as Pitt himself averred, in the teeth of the Cabinet understanding, and in his appeal to the Cabinet Beresford was strongly supported by the Chancellor. The whole question of Fitzwilliam's conduct in Ireland became the subject of a conference among the leading members of the Cabinet; his indiscretions, censured by the Prime Minister and repudiated by his closest friends, were too glaring to be condoned, and he was at once recalled. Lord Camden was sent over in his stead, and thenceforward, and until after the passing of the Act of Union, the supremacy of Fitzgibbon, now created Earl of Clare, remained unchallenged.

That so vehement an opponent of the Catholic claims as Lord Clare should ever have assented even to the limited measure of concession to the Catholic demands which was carried in 1793 is a circumstance which has excited the wonder of historians. The explanation probably is that that statesman, who, however little he sympathised with Irish aspirations for independence, knew Ireland as few or none of her rulers have known it, foresaw the inevitable consequences of the legislation he denounced. He perceived that the friction between Parliament and the enfranchised people must, if the exclusiveness of the former were maintained, lead to a popular storm which could not be withstood successfully, and that choice would have to be made between the concession in their entirety of the Catholic demands, and the absolute suppression of Ireland's parliamentary liberties. It is remarkable that from the year 1793, as he stated in his great speech on the Union, the Irish Chancellor had looked forward to the annihilation of the Grattan Parliament, and it is plain that in council he urged it vehemently upon successive Lords-Lieutenant. Westmorland, Fitzwilliam, and Camden in turn report in their correspondence with the members of the English Cabinet how strenuously this opinion was pressed upon their attention by Clare ;<sup>1</sup> and it is proved further that the idea was personally propounded to Pitt by his most trusted Irish adviser. Fitzgibbon had never cordially approved the policy which created the Grattan Parliament, though he had acquiesced frankly in the first fruits of that policy. He had, as a young member of the House of Commons, expressed his sentiments in this respect in the course of the celebrated debate on Grattan's momentous resolution of April 19, 1780, 'that the King's most excellent Majesty and the Lords and

<sup>1</sup> Even as early as 1784, the Duke of Rutland, who was then Lord-Lieutenant, had written to Pitt: 'Were I to indulge a distant speculation, I should say that without a *union* Ireland will not be connected with Great Britain in twenty years longer ;' and, more remarkable still, Fox had written a few months earlier, and while still a Minister: 'If either the Parliamentary reform in any shape, however modified, or any other point claimed by the Volunteers, be conceded, Ireland is irretrievably lost for ever.'

Commons of Ireland are the only power competent to bind or enact laws in this kingdom.'

'England,' he said on that occasion, 'is a proud and a high State, a nation not apt to crouch under any burdens. It is said that we are obtaining an act of justice through fear. Who will not be proud to resist such an idea? For my part I am so much an Irishman that I would not be even supposed to take advantage of fear. Let any man point out any advantage that can be gained by this resolution, and I will subscribe to this Declaration. But no one can do so. We are told that the people are at the Bar with petitions in one hand and arms in the other, and that they are become clamorous. Shall it be said that we are to be terrified by an armed people crowding to the Bar? I would rather be a slave to English laws than be ruled by a few factious men.'

Twenty years' experience of the working of an independent Legislature had not altered these opinions, which Clare steadily maintained throughout the whole period of its existence; and scarcely for a moment does he seem to have forgotten to promote these ideas. The fundamental arguments upon which he based his conclusions are fully set forth in his speech on the Catholic Relief Bill of 1793.

No personal episode connected with the struggle between the Government and the United Irishmen is more interesting than the relations which existed between Fitzgibbon and Wolfe Tone—the animating spirits of the two parties. If Tone was the mainspring of the revolutionary agitation, Fitzgibbon was at least in equal degree the master mind which controlled the forces directed to its overthrow. Each recognised in the other a foeman worthy of his steel. Referring, in his journal for March 1798, to the speech delivered by Clare in answer to Lord Moira's arraignment of the Irish Government, in which the Chancellor referred to Tone by name, the latter frankly expresses his admiration of the uncompromising vigour with which his enemy carried on the warfare between them. 'I can hardly, I think, be suspected of partiality to the Chancellor, but I declare I have a greater respect for his conduct on this occasion than for that of Lord Moira. He is, at least, an open

and avowed enemy; he takes his party, such as it is, like a man who expects no quarter, and is therefore determined to give none.' <sup>1</sup>

The two men had long known each other, and had even had opportunities of intimacy; for though Tone was by fifteen years the junior of Fitzgibbon, they had at one time been thrown together by a connection or kinship which existed between Fitzgibbon's family and that of Mrs. Tone. With the latter for some years prior to 1790 Tone was himself residing at their house in Grafton Street, at which Fitzgibbon was a frequent visitor; and through their common relatives the two men probably learnt a good deal of each other's character, even if they did not often meet. But these opportunities did not lead to any friendship, there was no mutual attraction; though Fitzgibbon, who was admittedly a firm friend to all who had claims upon him, would probably have been willing to befriend the husband of his young connection, who had not at that time disqualified himself for ministerial patronage. But as Tone was, to use his own words, 'one of the most ignorant barristers at the Four Courts,' and took little or rather no pains to conceal his contempt and dislike of his profession, it could not have been an easy matter, even for the omnipotence of an eighteenth-century Chancellor's patronage, to do much to advance his interests. And within a brief space Tone had taken two steps either of which must have proved sufficient to destroy any inclination which Fitzgibbon might have felt to help the young adventurer. He quarrelled with his wife's family, and he took to writing pamphlets for the Whig Club. Thenceforward the hostility between the two was inveterate and relentless. Tone's son, in the preface to the Washington edition of his father's *Life*, says that he scarcely had a personal enemy, with the two curious exceptions of Fitzgibbon and George Ponsonby, names which were probably never bracketed together in any other connection; yet, violently as the Chancellor denounced Tone's treasonable proceedings, it is not unlikely that it was due in

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Tone*, ii. 468 (Washington edition).

part to his kinship with Mrs. Tone that the young conspirator was allowed to leave the country in 1795, without being subjected to a prosecution, on the occasion of his being compromised with Jackson in the mission which cost the latter his life. The transactions which took place upon that occasion are detailed with great minuteness in the Beresford Correspondence in the letters of Marcus Beresford, who was the agent in those negotiations which ended in Tone's undertaking to go into voluntary exile; and the account there given of these negotiations agrees with the narrative in Tone's Life. Marcus Beresford, who was the son of John Beresford, Fitzgibbon's intimate friend, and who had lately been appointed private secretary to the new Chancellor, was on terms of intimacy with Tone, who was on his circuit at the bar, and for whom he had a warm regard. It was primarily to the friendship of Marcus Beresford that Tone owed his escape scot-free in the perils of 1794; but even that friendship could not have availed him had the Chancellor been unwilling to acquiesce in his escape. The unfavourable impressions of his young acquaintance formed in the Chancellor's mind in the course of their private intercourse were soon confirmed and deepened by what his position at the head of the Government enabled him to learn of Tone's part in the United Irish movement. A letter addressed to Tone's friend and colleague in the United Irish conspiracy, in which he avowed his decided wish for separation, fell into the hands of the Government, and fully revealed the secret aims of the men who were behind the Unity movement of 1791. Thenceforward Clare never ceased to point to Tone as the origin and pivot of the treasonable conspiracy of the United Irishmen, a view of his consequence which the statement confided to Beresford by Tone as the condition of his being allowed to leave the country in 1794 abundantly confirmed. This statement, which was made by Tone only upon the express condition that no use should be made of it to the prejudice of any of the persons referred to in it, except for the purpose of preventing a renewal of treasonable practices on the part of



those already implicated, only came to the hands of Lord Clare in 1797, after Beresford's death, and was destroyed with the rest of Clare's papers in 1802. No use was ever made of it, though its existence was referred to in Clare's speech on the state of Ireland in the House of Lords in 1801; but there is a reference to it in a very curious letter written by Thomas Emmet to Russell after the capture and before the death of Tone in the autumn of 1798. In this letter, which was written in response to an appeal by Russell to Emmet and the other State prisoners to exert themselves in Tone's behalf, Emmet, while averring that 'it is impossible for any one to be more concerned or more anxious than we all are about the fate of Tone,' excuses himself from interfering on the ground that intervention would injure rather than serve his friend, and assigns as the main ground of the futility of any efforts, the fact that 'the day we were at the Castle the Chancellor mentioned that Tone had, before he left the kingdom, signed such a confession of his own treason as would and was intended to hang him in the case of his ever returning.' It is impossible to doubt that Emmet, whom Tone in his autobiography brackets with Russell as the first of his friends, would have risked his own life could he have done so to any purpose in behalf of his unfortunate comrade in treason. But there can be no doubt that Emmet was right as to the hopelessness of any attempt to save Tone. Public opinion would not have tolerated it, and whatever forbearance Fitzgibbon might have been willing to exhibit in 1794 had ceased to influence him in 1798. Though he censured the irregularity of the court-martial by which Tone was condemned, he wrote with pitiless unconcern of the end of his old acquaintance. 'Nothing could be so preposterous as the whole proceedings with respect to Tone; he should certainly have been hanged on the shore where he landed.'

The fixed hostility to Catholic Emancipation which Clare manifested at every stage in his career, and which led him to oppose not merely every measure directly designed to that end, but every enactment which seemed to tend in its

direction, is the cardinal principle in his system of policy. And, however much a later age must deplore his views, it is impossible not to respect the consistency with which, from beginning to end of his career, he maintained the doctrine that Protestant ascendancy in Ireland is essential to the connection between the two kingdoms. It is easy, nowadays, to condemn a principle which has been repudiated by the State for more than two generations; but it is only fair to remember that Clare did no more than give expression with frankness and candour, if with needless acerbity, to principles of government which no one, in his time, affected to disclaim. The unalterably Protestant character of the constitution in Church and State was in Clare's time an axiom of government which no serious politician ever dreamt of challenging; and it remained one for years after his death.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the main burden of the speeches in favour of each successive relaxation of the penal laws was to prove that the security of Protestantism would remain as strong as before. Clare did not push his principles a jot further than they were pressed as late as 1817 in Peel's remarkable speech against the Catholic claims which made the ultimate author of emancipation the darling of the unbending champions of Protestant ascendancy.

But in one respect Clare pushed his view of the inviolable Protestantism of the British Constitution, as established at the Revolution, beyond that of most of his contemporaries. Mr. Lecky, in his account of the regency debates in the Irish Parliament, has observed upon the admirable subtlety of the speeches delivered on the legal aspects of the question by Fitzgibbon, whom he styles a consummate constitutional lawyer. It is not a little curious that to this subtlety was due the forging of the weapon which destroyed the hopes of Catholic emancipation in the year following the

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, in his notes of the conference of the English and Irish prelates on the occasion of the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, reports a remark of that astute observer, the late Primate Marcus G. Beresford, which pointedly illustrates the extent of the change of view in this regard: 'The Irish People used to mean the Protestants; now it means the Papists.' *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*, iii. 286.

Union, and caused the retirement of Pitt from office. Clare had always laid stress on the inviolability of the Protestant Constitution of the United Kingdom. 'I consider,' he said in 1793, 'a repeal of the Act of Supremacy in any of the hereditary dominions of the Crown of Great Britain to be as much beyond the power of Parliament as a repeal of the Great Charter or a repeal of the Bill of Rights.' In 1795, when, under the viceroyalty of Fitzwilliam, Grattan was about to bring in his bill for the further relief of the Catholics, Clare had embodied his views on the constitutional effects of the measure in a memorandum which was shown to the king by his intimate ally Lord Westmorland, Fitzwilliam's predecessor in the viceroyalty. In this document he raised for the first time the question whether the king could give his assent to the repeal of any of the laws affecting Irish Catholics without violating his coronation oath, and affirmed that the English Chancellor who should affix the great seal of England to any such repealing measure would stake his head upon the experiment. It does not appear how far this suggestion, which undoubtedly reached the king, took hold at the time of the royal mind, and it was repudiated by the English lawyers to whom the point was referred. But it is certain that the communications between Clare and the sovereign gave great annoyance to the Duke of Portland and the Whig members of the Cabinet; and it is certain that Fox was absolutely right when he said that the Catholic Bill, and not the question of the dismissal of the officials at Dublin Castle, was the true cause of Fitzwilliam's recall. But, however this may have been, it is unquestionable that Clare's views were adopted in their entirety in 1800 by the party in the Cabinet which was hostile to emancipation. As early as October 1800, the king was shown a letter or memorandum from the Irish Chancellor which was probably identical in reasoning, if not in language, with the views suggested by Clare in 1795. This document, which is printed in Campbell's 'Lives of the Chancellors,' having been found in the Rosslyn Papers, has been attributed by the author of that work to Lord

Loughborough; but from the fact that it coincides in its *ipsissima verba* with Clare's argument in 1795, it is impossible to question its real authorship. Through his friendship with Auckland, who was brother-in-law to the English Primate, Clare was able to reinforce the legal argument on the coronation oath by a spiritual appeal to the king's conscience; and Fox's statement in a letter to a correspondent discussing the Cabinet crisis in February 1801, that 'Fitzgibbon and the bishops have pushed the king to resist Pitt in this instance,' seems to have been no exaggeration of the facts of the case. The incident, however lamentable in its results, is certainly an astonishing proof of the influence which Clare was able to exert.

Clare is commonly represented as having died bitterly lamenting the part he had taken in bringing about a union which diminished his influence and abridged his powers. This statement is a great exaggeration of the facts. Undoubtedly he resented, and that bitterly, the deception which he considered had been practised on him by Cornwallis and Castlereagh in concealing from him the pledges made to the Roman Catholic leaders on the passing of the Union. But the incident just referred to sufficiently proves that, if his powers in Ireland were impaired, his influence in the highest quarters remained as potent as ever. Jonah Barrington says that 'the Union effected, through his friends, what Ireland could never accomplish through his enemies—his total overthrow;' and later writers have adopted the statement. But it is not correct. It is true, indeed, that Clare was on bad terms with Abbot, the Chief Secretary, afterwards Lord Colchester, whose prim and clerklike mode of doing business, and somewhat exaggerated notion of the importance of his office, were distasteful to the masterful methods of one long used to unquestioned and uncontrolled authority. Moreover, the duties of the Chancellor necessitating his presence in Ireland, it was difficult for Clare to exercise that direct control over Irish business in Parliament to which he had been for years accustomed. The two men never liked each other from the first moment

of Abbot's appointment ; and on his death the latter wrote with the pettiness of a petty mind that Clare had conducted himself impertinently towards him by his letters and language to other people, adding that his death delivered the Irish and also the British Government from great trouble. Clare had undoubtedly complained bitterly, and with his accustomed outspokenness, to his friends in the Cabinet of the conduct of the Chief Secretary. In a memorandum drawn up by Abbot in January 1802, within a few weeks of Clare's death, containing the heads of matters to be discussed with the Premier relative to Ireland, one of the topics is stated to be whether the Irish Government should be conducted by a Lord-Lieutenant or by Lords Justices, and Clare is represented as hostile to any government by a Lord-Lieutenant, and desirous himself to be Lord Deputy or at the head of Lords Justices, with Cooke as Secretary of State under him.

There can be little doubt that in a struggle for power between Clare and Abbot the former, had he lived, would have won the day ; and that Clare with his immense ability, his unequalled knowledge of Ireland, and his resolute determination to be at the head of affairs, would have regained under the weak Cabinet of Addington most, if not all, of the authority he had so long enjoyed under Pitt, there seems little room for question. But his health was broken and his race was run. His bodily vigour had been declining for a year or two, and an accident which he met with while riding had given a serious shock to his constitution. At the close of the Michaelmas sittings of 1801 he had proceeded to his country seat at Mount Shannon, where, though ill, he had been able to attend to necessary business, and whence he had, as late as December 28, written an important memorandum on the Maynooth difficulty. But on January 13 he was obliged to address an application to the Viceroy 'for leave to go to England for the recovery of my health, which is so much shattered that I begin to be apprehensive it will be impossible for me to attend to business on my return to town.' He had been attacked by a violent bleeding of the nose, which had



reduced him to a state of extreme weakness, and the physicians considered there was water on his chest. He still hoped to remain at his post until March, and a few days later came up to Dublin. But in his weakened condition the exertion of travelling was fatal, and a few days after reaching the capital he expired. He displayed in his last hours and in the presence of death the same fortitude and presence of mind which he had preserved in every emergency of his career, summoning Lord Kilwarden and the other chief judges to his bedside, and himself administering the oaths investing them under a commission with the custody of the Great Seal.

It remains to devote a few words to those traits in Clare's private character which attest his high qualities as a man. Even his severest critics have borne witness to the warmth of his affections, the strength of his friendship, his consideration for his inferiors and dependents, and his unfailing recognition of the duties of property. Of this last trait and of that practical patriotism it denotes, there is a striking illustration in his will—a document which throws a strong light upon his character, and of which the more personal passages have been printed by Lord Ashbourne in the chapter devoted to Lord Clare in his book on Pitt—which concludes with a warm recommendation to his sons 'to make the country which gave them birth the place of their general residence.' But these qualities he hid with a cold reticence from the world. Though in early life fond of society, he grew in later years, and as he became absorbed in affairs, reserved and cold. That he was sincere in his religious beliefs appears from his will, though it is to be feared he found it difficult to obey the injunction to forgive his enemies. Yet so morbid was his dislike of any display of religion that he would repair to a remote village church when he desired to partake of the Holy Communion.

But while it is right to render justice to the lighter and kindlier features in a character too often inconsiderately aspersed as well by posterity as by contemporaries, it would

be absurd to deny that Clare in his public aspect was a man of imperious, not to say despotic, temperament, little tolerant of opposition and disposed at all times to wield authority with Cromwellian sternness. When all is said and done, the most diligent research can never be worth half so much for the interpretation of character as the clear evidence of contemporary reputation. It is a libel upon history to say that it is no better than an old almanac, but it is undeniable that it is never so likely to be true as an old diary. To set up the incomplete records of the past against the incontrovertible testimony of tradition is often the shallowest pedantry. No apologies can remove the stain of falsity from Charles I. or the vice of cruelty from Henry VIII., and in the main posterity must accept the findings of contemporaries on questions of character. That Lord Clare was unconciliatory in manner and uncompromising in method; that he was the inveterate foe of Catholic emancipation at a time when, as is plain to us wiseacres of a later century, emancipation could have been granted with the fairest possibilities of success; and that these traits and opinions earned him the cordial hatred of his immediate opponents in the first instance, and of the mass of his countrymen in the second; <sup>1</sup> that he would have been both a wiser and a more successful statesman had he been able to restrain the irritating arrogance of demeanour which enraged his opponents and the irritable petulance of temper which embarrassed his friends; these things cannot be gainsaid, nor can it be denied that they detract from the credit of the statesman and the character of the man. But if a faithful study of Clare's career reveals what the most malevolent of

<sup>1</sup> The extent of Clare's unpopularity in his later years was painfully proved by the scene at his funeral, when an indignity was offered to his remains by the Dublin mob. Lord Ashbourne throws doubt upon this incident. But there can unfortunately be no doubt that dead cats were thrown at the coffin. The insult, however, was the occasion of an impromptu tribute to Clare's memory by Lysaght, well known in the Dublin of his day as a poet and wit:

‘ Cold is thy heart, hushed is thy voice ;  
 Around thy sacred urn  
 Rapine and fraud and guilt rejoice,  
 While truth and justice mourn.’

his contemporaries never ventured to deny, the warmth of his friendship, his loyalty to colleagues, his benevolence to dependents, his generosity to fallen foes, and his honest devotion to his country according to his view of her real interest, then it is not fitting that history should embalm only the lineaments of an unfeeling despot, for ever surveying the people from whom he sprang and whom he rose to rule with the sneer of an upstart and the scowl of a tyrant.

We deplored at the outset the fact that no contemporary pen attempted to provide such a biography of Clare as would have left to posterity a just conception of his character, and would have served to correct many of those false views of the events with which his name is connected which so long enjoyed an unchecked currency. But we have been fortunate enough to light upon an appreciation of his character which, written within a fortnight of the Chancellor's death, conveys a summary of Clare's qualities which seems to us to accord in the most striking manner with the impressions which our study of his career has suggested. In a letter addressed to Thomas Pelham<sup>1</sup> on hearing of Clare's death, the first Lord Stanley of Alderley drew the following portrait, which agrees so perfectly with the estimate we had formed both of the man and of the minister as tempts us to make it our last word :—

So Lord Clare is gone at last. I am not one of the men who at the moment of death deal out panegyrics on the deceased as a thing of course. But of Lord Clare I am tempted to say I thought him a great statesman. He was not one to amalgamate well with others. High-minded, confident, harsh, often governed by his own view of politics only, he was a man to be wondered at more than to be loved in his station, and few of those near him would feel inclined to value him as he deserved. But when brought to a fair judgment, the right estimation of him could not be refused. He was a man amongst all his countrymen the most suited to his time. Perhaps the time is past when his character was of the kind to be most beneficial, and that in the feeling of gratitude, as we look back and compare the past and present, we may be authorised to sink some portion of our regret.

<sup>1</sup> Pelham Correspondence, British Museum Additional MS. 33109. f. 93.

But had Lord Clare never existed I do believe the rebels would have been the masters in a great part of Ireland, and that the Union would not for years to come have taken place. No man ever saw through the mist of a political atmosphere more clearly than he did what the real situation of his country required ; and when he saw danger he could look at it with an eagle's eye. We Englishmen ought the more particularly to value him, for he was our steadiest friend.

## APPENDIX

For the reasons mentioned above, very few of Lord Clare's letters have survived, and of those that remain scarcely any have been published. The following letters, taken from the Auckland Papers in the British Museum, possess so much historical interest, and are besides so eminently characteristic of the writer, that it has seemed well to append them here.

My dear Eden,<sup>1</sup>—It is now high time I should thank you for your application for me to Lord Sandwich, and inform you of my defeat at the Election, which was occasioned by the rashness of one man—who really was my friend—and by the treachery of another, who broke faith with me. Fortunately for me, however, he was not so bigoted to the customs of the country as I was, for he refused to meet me when I sent to him. You have heard, no doubt, of the death of poor Burgh—Yelverton succeeds him, and I am to be appointed Attorney-General. The office was offered to me by Lord Northington in very handsome and honourable terms indeed, for which I believe I am in a great measure indebted to you, as he told me very fairly that he had first taken up his opinions of me from your representations. Believe me that I did not want this additional proof of the warmth and sincerity of your attachments to your friends in this country. I understand that we are to have additional Judges, in which event Scott will be Prime Serjeant. This however, he tells me, is to be a profound secret. Lord Northington means well certainly, but I very much fear he does not know at this day what may be his real strength. The only men with whom he has hitherto had any confidential communication are the Chancellor, Grattan, Yelverton, Forbes, Geo. Ponsonby, and Chas. Frs. Sheridan. You know as well as any man how practicable it is to govern this country at this time with the assistance and by the advice

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Papers*, vol. viii. f. 281. Add. MS. 34419.

of such a Cabinet. The old and tried friends of Government have been applied to as of course, and I much fear that general professions have been mistaken for explicit engagements. I have not been in town more than three days, in which time I have had but very little communication with Mr. Pelham. However, I mean to state to him very fully my opinion of his situation in this country before we meet on Tuesday. They choose to retain Yelverton in the House of Commons as their Minister 'till Christmas, to which I have most readily assented, so far as I am personally concerned: but I did submit to Mr. Pelham's better judgment whether it was a prudent act of administration, as he might be certain of being told in the House of Commons of the glaring inconsistency of appointing three new Judges at a time when the principal Court of business in the hall was limited to two, to answer Ministerial purposes in the House of Commons; and that gentlemen who were not actually bound to him would not be very ready to follow a man in the House of Commons who was avowedly to retire from it in the beginning of a session, and consequently was not himself pledged in any degree. But the Chancellor thinks otherwise. The Chancellor, you know, in giving advice very seldom has any family job in contemplation: in this instance, however, he looks to the Borough of Carrickfergus, which Yelverton represents. He hopes by postponing the election there to work upon Lord Donegal to return his son into Parliament. Pray how does the Duke of Portland relish the proceedings of his friends and ministers the Volunteers of Ireland? He told them in very plain terms that they had abolished the supremacy of the British Parliament, and they now choose to abolish the supremacy of their own. A Provincial Congress has been sitting for some days in this town—yesterday it was adjourned—and their proceedings are held to be extremely temperate and decent, for they have entered into resolutions from which there arises a very remote implication that our grievances may be redressed thro' the medium of the Legislature. At Londonderry they are of a different opinion: at a meeting of Volunteers there a resolution was proposed that they would unite in every exertion to procure a redress of grievances. Mr. Robert Stewart moved that their exertions might be constitutional; Lord Bristol opposed him, and on a division beat him ten to one. What a situation has the Duke of Portland reduced this country to! If concessions are now made to the people there is an end of all order [and] government. The gentlemen of the country see it, but they are afraid to stand forth, lest possibly,



upon a change of English administration, they may be all proscribed for supporting the interests of both countries. I can very truly assure you that I have for some time thought seriously of quitting this country altogether; and most assuredly, if good order and government are not quickly restored, I will do it.

Pray make my affectionate compliments to Mrs. Eden. I have sent her gloves by Mrs. Jefferyes, with directions to have them left for her at Sir John Eden's in Downing Street. If Mrs. Jefferyes sh<sup>d</sup> omit to send them there, you will hear of her at Mrs. Ponsonby's in Holles Street, Cavendish Square.

Y<sup>rs</sup> always truly and affectionately, my dear Eden,

(Signed) JOHN FITZGIBBON.

Dublin: October the 11th, 1783.

*Postscript.*—If anything worth mentioning occurs here, you shall hear from me.

My dear Eden,<sup>1</sup>—Be assured that I never can doubt the warmth of your friendship for me, and that no man prizes it more highly than I do. The fact is that many of the gentlemen who compose our Opposition here, having in the course of the session thought fit to exercise their talents for abuse upon me, not perhaps with all the success with which they had flattered themselves, seemed inclined to make a different experiment upon me. You know the genius of my countrymen well enough to see that, in my situation, it became inevitably necessary to undeceive them in this particular; and Mr. Curran having in so many words stated 'that I was prone to give offence and prone to deprecate it,' I sent Ogle to him to desire that he would disclaim the words, or give me an opportunity to convince him of his error. After taking twelve hours to consider of my proposal, during which time there were divers consultations of the leaders of the party upon the subject, they determined that he should fight: and, after I had received his fire and returned it, the young gentleman thought good to acknowledge that he had been mistaken, and we parted. I could not avoid this little detail, because of all characters I despise that of a man who is too forward to fight, and in this instance I trust you will at once acquit me of any such disposition.

I wrote you a long letter about a week since containing a pretty accurate account of the state of Irish politicks at our last adjournment. Affairs wear at present a much more favourable aspect for Government. Mr. William Ponsonby surrendered at discretion on Tuesday, with many acknowledgements for his

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Papers*, vol. ix. f. 90. Add. MS. 34420.

error in having embarked in such an undertaking, and with as many professions of sincere and warm attachment to the Duke of Rutland's Government. They have been all received by the Duke, and I am perfectly well satisfied that the friends of Mr. Ponsonby will not again betray his Government, unless they have a certain prospect of doing so with effect. This may very easily be prevented, for you may be assured that there never was an opposition in this country of which so many members were anxious to be bought, and who might be bought upon cheaper terms. God bless them all! they hold character and consistency in very laudable contempt, and if they are but paid will in the next session unsay everything which they have been saying and swearing in this.

Orde set out upon a system of Economy and of never making any engagement. I have often told him that this was not the way of doing business in that little corner of the Castle; he now sees it, and I have no doubt that when this error of Government is corrected we shall sail before the wind. I must agree with you that some of the amendments made by the English Parliament in our propositions were perfectly reasonable, and the principle of the fourth proposition particularly, no rational man ought to object to—the wording of it, however, was highly injudicious. Whether we may hereafter recover our senses and discover that the recollection of Mr. Grattan's splendid periods is but a slender consolation for poverty and the most absolute dependence upon Great Britain, which is most certainly our present condition, I cannot take upon me to say. I see by Mr. Woodfall's paper that I am immediately to be removed from my office and from the kingdom of Ireland—the one [event] is certainly as probable as the other. I have habits of business which I should find it difficult to shake off, and most certainly the clamours of an Irish mob will not drive me to England, nor am I quite so great a fool as to wish to seek my fortune upon a publick stage there. Our session I hope will close in about ten days, at which time I mean to go into the county of Limerick to look a little into my private business, with which I have been for near two years most perfectly unacquainted. Lord Chief Justice Paterson lies dangerously ill upon his circuit; if he should die, Carleton has no competitor for his seat on the Bench. Pray remember me kindly to Mrs. Eden.

Y<sup>rs</sup> always truly, my dear Eden,  
(Signed) JOHN FITZGIBBON.

Dublin: August the 29th, 1785.

My dear Eden,<sup>1</sup>—You will readily believe that no man has received more pleasure than myself at the account of your present situation, which General Cuninghame communicated to me immediately after he had received your letter. I do not think that any man who is your friend can hesitate in approving the post you have taken: surely it would have been unpardonable in you to decline a commission, which you were called upon to accept as the man who was best qualified to attend to the interests of Great Britain in the depending Treaty with France. Many thanks to you for your applications to Lord Sandwich and Lord Loughborough for my friend Oliver; there has not as yet been an election, but whenever it may happen I do not think he will meet with any opposition. Lees tells me that Mrs. Eden and you want some Limerick gloves, but that you will not apply to me under the apprehension that I am too gallant a gentleman to open a debtor and creditor account for them. As you are not likely, however, to get them for several months, unless by my interest with the Limerick glover, send me a glove of Mrs. Eden's and one of yours, and let me know what number you will have, and whether you wish to have them of the very thin sort, and I will undertake to forward them to you by a messenger before you quit England. In the article of their price set your conscience at rest; when you are settled in Paris I will in return give you a commission to send me over a service of desert china, and, if you will allow me to pay you for the aforesaid china, rest assured I will make you pay me for your gloves. We are likely to have a very short and a very quiet session of Parliament here—I do not see any materials for our Opposition but the old topic of Reform, which is now become a jest, and Mr. Corry's project of making Navigation Laws for England, which is equally feasible. The news-writers have discovered that I am extremely anxious to be Chancellor of Ireland or, if that cannot be, to succeed Paterson in the Common Pleas: I need not, however, tell you that for the present I had rather remain where I am—I do not as yet feel any inclination to become an old woman.

Pray remember me to Mrs. Eden, and believe me to be always very truly y<sup>rs</sup>,

(Signed) JOHN FITZGIBBON.

Dublin: January the 10th, 1786.

Rt. Hon. Wm. Eden.

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Papers*, vol. ix. f. 367.

My dear Eden,<sup>1</sup>—I have deferred writing to you in the idea that it was possible I might be able to get to Paris before my return to Ireland ; but this I now see is impossible. As to the commission which I gave you for Sèvres china, I wish to rely on Mrs. Eden altogether. I am obliged at times to have twenty covers at dinner, so that she will proportion the size of the service to this circumstance. I must trouble her to get me frames and figures to cover them—the frames I would not wish to be very broad. As to price—anything from two to three hundred pounds will, I suppose, defray it. The best way of transporting it to Ireland will be by Rouen, as there are ships which always ply from thence to Dublin. Many thanks to you for your good wishes ; I have trained on surprisingly to an honest life. You should have had the gloves you desired for yourself but that the glover had died just before I received your commission, and there was no leather in the shop fit for men's gloves. That you may not again accuse me for not allowing you to pay for Mrs. Eden's gloves, I now tell you that they cost five pounds, four shillings, Irish currency. If you can reduce this to the coin of England or of France, pray deduct it from the price of my china and draw upon Messrs. Lilley and Roberts, Laurence Pountney Lane, on my account for the balance. To-morrow I set out for Spa and shall return here about the eighth of October. Pray remember me to Mrs. Eden and believe me to be always very truly

Y<sup>rs</sup> (signed) JOHN FITZGIBBON.

London : August the 26th, 1736.

The Honble. Wm. Eden.

My dear Eden,<sup>2</sup>—Your letters have been forwarded to me from Spa ; and since I received yours of the 13th I have seen Mr. Pitt, who let me have copies of the papers which you mentioned. If you can prevail with the French Cabinet to put Foster's construction upon the present duties payable in Ireland upon foreign linens, I think it will not be possible that any man can murmur at what respects Ireland. Whether we shall actually make our way into the French market or not, certainly we have the opportunity of doing it—and you could do no more for us. I have also spoken to Mr. Pitt upon the subject which I mentioned to you, in which I am more immediately interested. He was perfectly fair upon it, but said that he could not give me a full explanation without speaking to the King. If Lord Lifford will but hold out for a few

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Papers*, vol. xi. f. 146. Add. MS. 34422.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. xi. f. 506.



years, I think the object will be within my reach. It is still uncertain whether Orde will return—I know he wishes it, but he is frightened at the idea of encountering the business of the session. So far as respects our adopting the Navigation Code of England, I think is nearly settled. I am just getting into my chaise to get to Ireland. On the important business of my china, when I return to Ireland I shall be able to let you know whether in the present situation of the two countries it will easily be admitted to an entry: you must draw upon me at Dublin,—I know that Perregeaux the banker corresponds with Latouche. Pray remember me to Mrs. Eden and believe me to be always very truly

Y<sup>rs</sup> (Signed) JOHN FITZGIBBON.

London : October the 27th, 1786.

My dear Eden,<sup>1</sup>—I find by your last letter to Beresford that we have got into a damned scrape here, principally from the blundering stupidity of that old Balderdash Bitch, Lord Sydney. Altho' Orde pressed him again and again for official instruction upon the subject, he never could obtain any answer from him till the Bill for carrying into effect the Treaty had passed our House of Commons, and then for the first time stated that France objected to the duty of fourpence by the yard upon Irish linens imported into France, and insisted upon an *ad valorem* duty. Whether this may be reasonable or not I will not take upon me to determine; but sure I am its being reasonable will not make it the more likely to go down in this country. Rose in his private letters to Orde stated again and again that the duties upon the linens in both countries were to follow our hereditary duty on Dutch linens; that we should be safe in announcing it so in publick, and Parnell stated the duties accordingly in the House of Commons. If I do not mistake, the Treaty stipulates the duties upon linens by the yard. How then can they now shift their ground, and insist upon a duty *ad valorem*? We have now pretty nearly got to a conclusion of our session, and have got through the business of it without difficulty, for which we are indebted solely to the utter inability and folly of the gentlemen, God bless them! who think they are in opposition to Government. Orde is one of the honestest and best intentioned men I ever met with, and if he were to follow the first impulse of his mind, would do extremely well. But he has got wholly under the direction of Sackville Hamilton, who is an excellent Clerk, but a

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Papers*, vol. xiii. f. 266. Add. MS. 31124.



diabolical Minister. Everything is caution and indecision. He has frightened Orde from appointing a judge in the place of Robinson who died in January, and from putting Carleton into the place of poor old Paterson, who for two years before his death was unable to attend to business. It was necessary to send out Carleton as a Judge of Assize to prevent Sir Frederick Flood from murdering the King's subjects *Colore Officii*. James Brown has never come out of his dormitory since he was last appointed Prime Serjeant, so that here have I been for more than a month without any manner of assistance, save now and then from the Secretary of State, employed from day to day in preparing Bills for Reforming the Magistracy, etc. etc., and in combating absurd observations upon them in and out of the House. If it were not that at times I get relief from a volley of execrations, I do believe I should blow-up.

Pray make my best compliments to Mrs. Eden. Would she wish for Limerick gloves for herself or her friends? Perhaps the Queen of France might condescend to wear them.

Y<sup>rs</sup> always very truly, my dear Eden,

JOHN FITZGIBBON.

Dublin: April 4th, 1787.

My dear Eden,<sup>1</sup>—I had heard with infinite regret of Mrs. Eden's illness, which however from your account of her I hope she is in a fair way of shaking off. Many thanks to you for your very kind expressions of satisfaction at my appointment to the Great Seal, in which I do most readily believe you are warm and sincere. You will be pleased to hear that the appointment has been very well received by all descriptions of men in this Country and that I have been able already to dispose of the arrears of business which I found in the Court of Chancery. Probably you have heard with some surprize of the turn which our Politics took in the course of the last session of Parliament. As to our wise Address on the Regency I do not believe that any exertion of Government could have prevented it. Possibly decisive measures at the moment of the King's recovery might have stopped the disgraceful combination which was afterwards formed against his government, but after it had been formed, there was no possibility of dissolving it in time to prevent serious mischief to the country without an offer of general amnesty to the conspirators. Grattan's exploits in leading them have lowered him more than you can imagine. The people at large consider him

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Papers*, vol. xviii. f. 406. Add. MS. 34429.

as the tool of an English party, and the gentlemen who were pleased to rank under his banner abuse him as impracticable and insufficient. I hope that the gentlemen who are in opposition in Great Britain will learn before it is too late the danger of playing their game in this country. If they do not agree with their antagonists in anything else, they must learn to agree in supporting the King's Government in Ireland, else perhaps they may, before they are aware of it, have this country a stake to fight for with a foreign enemy. By the way, our good neighbour the French King is now reaping the full fruits of his attachment to the cause of American liberty. If there exists anything in the shape of political gratitude, surely America will now send General Washington to the assistance of their great and good ally. Pray make my best compliments to Mrs. Eden. I am not certain that I wrote to thank her for all the trouble she had in executing our Commission for Sèvres China, which came to Ireland perfectly safe, and does very great honour to her taste.

Yours always very truly, my dear Eden,

FITZGIBBON.

Dublin: August the 4th, 1789.

My dear Lord,<sup>1</sup>—Our rebellion I am sorry to say begins to wear a very serious and formidable aspect. The insurgents are now in possession of nearly the whole of the County of Wexford, and are so strong that I fear the force which has been sent against them is altogether unequal to dislodge them. Yesterday a column of five hundred of the King's troops received a very severe check near Gorey, and lost three pieces of cannon with all their ammunition, breadcarts, etc. etc. This misfortune was altogether owing to the rashness and ignorance of Colonel Walpole who commanded them, and was killed early in the action. General Loftus who commanded another body of troops which was to have co-operated with Walpole has fallen back several miles, and, as yet, we have had no accounts from Johnson & Eustace (Useless) who marched from another point against Wexford.

Our situation is critical in the extreme. We know that there has been a complete military organization of the people in three-fourths of the Kingdom. In the North nothing will keep the rebels quiet but a conviction that where treason has broken out the rebellion is merely Popish, but even with this impression in their minds we cannot be certain that their love of republicanism will not outweigh their inveteracy against Popery. In the Capital there

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Papers*, vol. xlv. f. 391. Add. MS. 34455.

is a rebel army organized, and if the garrison was forced out to meet an invading rebel army from the side of Wexford, they would probably on their return find the Metropolis in possession of its proper rebel troops. In a word, such is the extent of treason in Ireland, that if any one district is left uncovered by troops, it will be immediately possessed by its own proper rebels. Believe me I do not magnify our danger ; you know that I have long foreseen the mischief and condemned the imbecility which has suffered it to extend itself. But as the mischief has taken place, if Great Britain is really interested in preserving this country she ought instantly to push over a very large force to this coast, which may save her hereafter many millions in money, and many thousands of her soldiers. We also stand in need very much of some General officers who know somewhat of their profession.

Yours always truly, my dear Lord,

CLARE.

Dublin : Tuesday (June 5th, 1798).

My dear Lord,<sup>1</sup>—There has been a very sharp action with the Rebels at New Ross, a town which lies midway between Waterford and Wexford. It would seem that their object was to force their passage to Waterford, for they attacked the King's troops at five o'clock in the morning of Tuesday with uncommon fury and did not give up the assault till they had been three times repulsed. The action, by the General's Report (Johnson), continued ten hours, and at the first onset our troops were beat back with the loss of four guns, however Johnson rallied them and charged at their head. He recovered his guns and took from the rebels three or four ship guns which they had brought into the field. The rebels lost in killed more than two thousand five hundred men. But this lesson has not deterred them from collecting their scattered troops, which are now assembled in very great numbers on the high grounds between Ross and Wexford, and on the other side of Wexford towards Arklow and Huchtown. There they seem determined to maintain themselves till they are dislodged, which I trust will very soon happen, as General Lake has ordered a very large force to march down upon them from different points, and means, as I understand, immediately to go down and take the command of the whole force which is to act against them. Our loss in the last action has been inconsiderable, but amongst the killed I am

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Papers*, Add. MS. 29475, f. 43. This letter is only dated Friday, but must have been written on June 8, 1793, the battle of New Ross having been fought on Tuesday, June 5.

extremely sorry to inform you we have to lament poor Lord Mountjoy. The obstinacy with which the rebels fought in the battle proves the justice of Lord Grenville's observation, and there is a circumstance which makes it still more important to put down this great effort of rebellion in the county of Wexford instantly if it be possible.

The rebel camps are all filled with priests, who have certainly in a great degree, if not altogether, worked upon the miserable wretches, who have been heretofore sacrificed, to fight with a degree of enthusiasm scarcely to be credited. Heretofore the Popish soldiers in our ranks have been steady, but if these villains should be enabled to extend their influence to our camps the consequences must be fatal.

As to the subject of the Union with the British Parliament, I have long been of opinion that nothing short of it can save this country. I stated this opinion very strongly to Mr. Pitt in the year 1793, immediately after that fatal mistake into which he was betrayed by Mr. Burke and Mr. Dundas in receiving an appeal from the Irish Parliament by a Popish Democracy. I again stated this opinion to him in the last winter; and if this were a time for it, I think I could make it clear and plain to every dispassionate man in the British Empire that it is utterly impossible to preserve this country to the British Crown if we are to depend upon the precarious bond of Union which now subsists between Great Britain and Ireland. It makes me almost mad when I look back at the madness, folly, and corruption, in both countries, which has brought us to the verge of destruction.<sup>1</sup>

Yours always truly, my dear Lord,  
CLARE.

My dear Lord,<sup>2</sup>—I have been so teased with a cough for the last three weeks that I have been obliged to spend nearly the whole of my time in bed. I am just now considerably relieved, but despair of shaking it off altogether till I can get into the country. The main difficulty which it strikes me you will have to encounter at the outset of the very important business to which your last letter alludes is our strong national love of Jobbing, which must receive a fatal blow in the ultimate success of the measure. This creditable feeling, altho' by no means extinguished, has been very much counteracted by an apprehension not ill-founded, for the

<sup>1</sup> The last paragraph has been printed by Lord Ashbourne in his *Pitt* at p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> *Auckland Papers*, vol. xliii. f. 386. Add. MS. 34454.



safety of our persons and Estates, and I should hope will ultimately yield to it. I think the general feeling of the landed interest is in favour of the measure, and when the advantages of it in a commercial point of view are understood, I should suppose the commercial interest of the country would also be generally and strongly for it. The Catholics will, I make no doubt, oppose it with violence, as will Northern republicans, and therefore before the measure is avowed, it will be essentially necessary to have a strong British military force here, nor in my opinion will it be prudent to avow it until Great Britain is at peace with her foreign enemies. The Speaker will, I believe, be against the measure, and I know the Archbishop of Cashel will oppose it vehemently. Lord Shannon, I think, sees the necessity which presses for it; and I am pretty confident that the general feeling of the House of Lords is in favour of it. Our proprietors of Boroughs which would not be represented, will demand compensation; and if this should be practicable, I make no doubt a great majority of them will acquiesce. I think the Rebellion may now be said to be fairly subdued. There are many parties of banditti still out, who do great mischief in the counties of Kildare and Wicklow. Lord Cornwallis has authorized the general officers in these districts to offer pardon and protection to such of them as shall come in with their arms, and give their names and places of abode, and I should hope they will be very happy to accede to these terms. Nothing could have operated with so much effect as sending over your militia to us, not only as force to act against the rebels of the present day, but as a force which may be poured in upon them on any future occasion. What a contrast is there between the conduct of the English nobility and gentry who have thus volunteered for the preservation of this country, and the profligate folly of the worthy Lords and Commoners who have for the last month wasted their best endeavours for the encouragement of our rebels! I am told that these gentlemen have honoured me with no inconsiderable portion of their animadversion, and that I am particularly indebted for their civility to his Grace of Bedford, Mr. Fox, and the young cub his nephew. From what I have seen of Lord Cornwallis I like him much.

Y<sup>rs</sup> always very truly, my dear Lord,

CLARE.

Dublin: July the 3rd, 1798.

What could have induced the Dukes of Devonshire and Leeds to join the gang in their Irish treason?



12 Feb. 1800.

My dear Lord,<sup>1</sup>—I have not written to you since the last meeting of Parliament because I got alarmed at our situation. I have recovered confidence, however, and I think better of our prospect of success now than ever. I opened the business in the House of Lords on Monday, to you I will say, with great effect. I spoke for four hours, and was attended to throughout, but I was so exhausted as to feel utterly unable to conclude with any minute statement of details. Yesterday we had another division on the question in the House of Commons; our majority 47, which I think will hold. The few honest fools who vote with the gang are alarmed at their violence, and disgusted with the company they are forced to keep. And I think the consulate have been frightened on the subject of bribery. I am endeavouring to make sense of a vile note which has been sent to me for correction of my speech. If I can make sense of it I will send you a printed copy. Is it not nearly incredible that Lord Downshire's paper should have so totally deprived him of all understanding? The strong grapple made by Lord Cornwallis with him, has had the best effects in the present contest for the Irish Throne.

Yours always truly,

CLARE.

*Postscript.*—Pray remember me very kindly to all my female friends of your family.

*Letter from Thomas Addis Emmet to Thomas Russell.*

The following is the letter of Thomas Addis Emmet to his friend Russell referred to in the text. The original, which is undated, is in the Record Tower at Dublin Castle.

My dear Russell,—It is impossible for any one to be more concerned or more anxious than we all are about the fate of Tone. There is not a thing that would appear to us to have any chance of saving his life that we would not gladly do. But it is owing to that very feeling that your letter has embarrassed us most exceedingly, because your letters seem to imply that you and your fellow-prisoners imagine that some such thing could be done; while we have no doubt that any such application would, if possible, do injury. When we negotiated for Bond's life, etc., we had something to give—our banishment and some information. What have we to give now? If we cannot make it a matter of truck

<sup>1</sup> *Auckland Papers*, vol. xlv. f. 256. Add. MS. 34455.

surely you cannot suppose we could obtain it as a favour, when we have been in vain soliciting the very small favour of good faith being kept with us. I am sure Government hate us, and if we asked a favour they would doubly rejoice in the opportunity of gratifying their own vengeance against him and dislike against us. The day we were at the Castle, the Chancellor mentioned that Tone had, before he left the kingdom, signed such a confession of his own treason as would and was intended to hang him in case of his ever returning, so that I am sure the points on which you rely would avail nothing. Indeed, I am convinced it would not be in the power of any interest to ransom him. Even retaliation (the only chance) I think will not avail; but if it should have any weight our interference would interfere with it. These are our fears, and have prevented our doing anything, because we see nothing we can do. But if you or your friends with you can point out anything which you think would have any chance of success, draw it up and send it to us, and I assure you it is not a trifle will prevent our signing it.

Yours,

T. A. EMMET

## IV

*CASTLEREAGH AND IRELAND IN 1798*

THE author of 'Waverley' has laid it down that sixty years represent the period at which the chronicle of the events that make up the record of political struggles mellows into history. Two generations, he considered, should suffice to give to the animosities of party rancour, and to the still deeper wounds of which even a brief period of civil warfare must inevitably leave the scars, that neutral tone which the veil of time sooner or later imparts to all things human. When the first chapters of 'Waverley' were written, sixty years had elapsed since the attempt of the Young Pretender had convulsed Scottish society in a struggle which was at once dynastic and national, and which divided sharply the Celtic from the Teutonic elements in the Scottish people. Yet in the course of no more than two generations the fever of loyalty and feudalism which gave reality to the rising in behalf of Prince Charlie had so completely vanished as to have ceased to affect in any real sense the course of Scottish politics. Attachment to Jacobite traditions had become no more than a picturesque survival, with just enough of reality about it to lend attraction to a romance of the times when it dominated the national aspirations of Scotland, and threatened, not remotely, a revolution in Great Britain.

The very opposite case of the Irish Rebellion of 1798 affords in this respect yet another of the many striking contrasts in which the history of the two islands that form the three kingdoms abounds. Not two generations, nor three, not sixty years nor a century, have availed to erase from the sombre memories of the Celtic population of Ireland the recollection of the events of '98. For them the lapse of

time has scarcely served to soften a single animosity, or to obliterate the marks of racial and religious hate which the disorders of the Rebellion traced afresh in Ireland. In the popular imagination the long procession of a hundred years has only served to tinge with the romance of history the figures of the chief actors in a struggle which, hopeless as were its objects, bloody as was its progress, and mournful its conclusion, is still regarded with a certain enthusiasm of patriotic reverence as a central and inspiring episode in the drama of Irish history.

For this peculiar attachment to memories of defeat and failure which to other races would be too depressing to dwell upon, it is not difficult to account. The pathetic delight with which the Irish people love to indulge in the gloomy recollections of their abortive past is no new feature in their character. Unfortunately for themselves, they have ever been as unable to forget as unwilling to forgive, and the contemplation of their own sufferings and misfortunes has continually a morbid attraction for them. They will allow neither the balm of time nor the oblivion of the grave to work their merciful alleviations. Contests which the victors have long ceased to remember, the vanquished cannot forbear to brood over. And but for the unequalled facility with which they can console themselves with the shadowy might-have-beens of their history, the Irish would surely be the most unhappy instead of the most buoyant of peoples. This characteristic optimism of the race was never more powerfully exemplified than in the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the Rebellion of 1798. Had the movement which it was proposed to celebrate been a triumph instead of a disaster, a glory rather than a reproach, a splendid Waterloo rather than a humiliating Sedan, it could not have been more magniloquently commemorated.

It is long since the subdued notes that followed the Union have checked the grandiloquence of Irish eulogies of the heroes of the Rebellion. The fear to speak of '98, of which Dr. Ingram spoke in his stirring lyric, has ceased to

trouble the patriot. The cult of the Rebellion began among the Young Irelanders, and remained as strong in 1898 as it had been fifty years earlier. It did not indeed find literary expression in a form as attractive as when Thomas Davis sat down to devote the stores of his wide historical knowledge and the resources of a gifted imagination to the apotheosis of Theobald Wolfe Tone ; but there was no lack of writing on the subject. Fair enthusiasts of English blood and gentle nurture recalled for crowds of rough artisans the story of the more prominent among the men of '98, and picturesque patriots who had played their part in '48, presiding at the lectures, typified the continuity of the revolutionary tradition. The leader of the most thoroughgoing branch of Irish Separatism,<sup>1</sup> himself a Wexford man, descanted to crowded audiences on those episodes in the Wexford rising which are the most flattering to the self-esteem of Irishmen. The popular press teemed with articles and paragraphs which, whatever might be thought of the reality of the commemoration as a serious political display, testified at any rate to the hold which the Rebellion and its incidents still retain upon the popular fancy.

Many additions have been made in recent years to the already considerable literature which the progress of a century has accumulated round the history of the Irish Rebellion of 1798 ; but, meritorious as some of these undoubtedly are, none of them supply more successfully than earlier publications that accurate, graphic, and impartial record of the most picturesque episode in modern Irish history which has long been desired by the public. For despite the wealth of contemporary narratives, many of them possessing high individual merit, and providing a storehouse of materials from which more modern accounts must always be largely drawn, and notwithstanding the elaborate studies of the rising which give so much attraction and value to the pages of 'The English in Ireland,' and of 'The History of England in the Eighteenth Century,' the final history of the Rebellion has still to be written. In one

<sup>1</sup> Now (1901) the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party.



sense, indeed, it is impossible to add anything of serious importance to the pages which Mr. Froude and Mr. Lecky have devoted to the subject. The narrative of the elder historian may and does suffer from a characteristic inexactness of detail, and from the somewhat polemical character of the objects its author had in view in writing it. But making the fullest allowance for the defects of Froude's qualities, his account of the Rebellion is in general reliable and accurate, while the picturesque vividness with which the period is recalled and presented must remain the despair of all subsequent students in the same school. Still, with all these merits, the Rebellion is with Froude necessarily no more than an episode in a long historical drama, and the brilliant narrative in 'The English in Ireland' cannot be divorced from its context.

Of Mr. Lecky's yet more detailed examination of the story, it is impossible to exaggerate the merits, nor can any one who follows the historian of the eighteenth century fail to acknowledge an immense indebtedness to the results of his patient investigations, scrupulous accuracy, and generous indication of the sources from which he has drawn his facts. But though of higher authority than Froude's as a chronicle of events, Mr. Lecky's work is scarcely as formidable a rival to any fresh attempt at a history of the Rebellion, and his pages on the Rebellion have less of narrative unity than his predecessor's. The effect, however, of the attention devoted to the subject by the two most eminent of modern writers on Irish history has been to deter others from venturing into the same field; and thus it happens that, at a distance of over fifty years from its first publication, so poor a book as Maxwell's 'History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798, with Memoirs of the Union and Emmet's Insurrection of 1803,' remains the most complete account of the rising accessible in a single volume. Even this work, however, is less a history than a compilation based on such authorities as were accessible so long ago as 1845, and is largely a *réchauffé* of the writings of Musgrave, Hay, Barrington, and others of the earlier historians. Its literary merits are not conspicuous,

and the book lives mainly through the quaint and rather blood-curdling illustrations with which it was enriched by Cruikshank, whose plates, by the way, though possessing the distinctive touch of the artist, indicate the hopeless unfitness of a caricaturist to be the illustrator of a tragedy.

Of works earlier than Maxwell's the number is large, and the merits are not inconsiderable; but they are all too deeply tinged with the prejudices of their respective authors to be entirely trustworthy, even where their writers were fully informed. For the Wicklow and Wexford rising the realistic narratives of Hay and Cloney on the rebel side, of Taylor and Jackson on the loyalist, give a vivid picture of the most stirring episodes by actors in the struggle. Of the works which attempt to tell the whole story, Gordon's narrative has been eulogised by Mr. Lecky as presenting the most truthful, most moderate, and most humane account of the Rebellion, and of its causes. In that judgment most people will be inclined to concur; but there is no reason why the encomium should be paid, as it generally is, at the expense of Sir Richard Musgrave, the most painstaking and most fully informed of the crowd of writers who approached the subject in the years immediately succeeding the Rebellion. His narrative has been stigmatised by a recent writer on Irish history 'as written in the evil Orange spirit.' But a more just estimate of its merits has been expressed by an American historian of the final episode in the rising, who is certainly not lacking in sympathy for the weaker party. The author of 'The French Invasion of Ireland,' Mr. Gribayédoff, points out that whilst it has been the fashion among anti-English chroniclers of '98 to treat Musgrave's book as utterly unreliable, a comparison of the 'Memoirs' with other contemporary works fails to reveal any instance of conscious misrepresentation. And the same writer also points out that his connection with the Government gave Musgrave access to channels of information at that time closed to other writers, his appendix of sworn depositions and other original documents giving warrant for many charges which it has been the fashion of too many popular writers

to denounce as unsupported by authentic evidence. But though many works have been published on either side of the controversy that still rages round the Rebellion which form valuable additions, from their very different points of view, to our knowledge of those aspects of the insurrection to which they more particularly refer, a complete and independent narrative of the whole story of the Rebellion, based upon the original authorities, printed and documentary, still remains to be written.

The deficiencies of the early historians of the Rebellion intensify the regret which all students of the period must feel that the persuasions of Castlereagh were ineffectual to prevail upon the one man in whom opportunity and capacity united to provide an ideal historian of the Rebellion and the Union. In 1811, while most of the chief personages of the time were still alive—Grattan and Castlereagh, Cornwallis and Plunket—but when the asperities engendered by the conflict had become in some degree assuaged, the chief agent in carrying the Act of Union pressed upon his old friend and private secretary, Alexander Knox, the duty of compiling, from the ample materials then available, a full and authentic account of the events of that stormy and turbulent time. The quondam associate upon whom, in a remarkable letter published in Owen Maddyn's 'Chiefs of Parties,' he urged this duty, was himself a remarkable and interesting figure. A native of the north of Ireland, he had become intimate with Castlereagh while the latter was still a member of the Opposition; and when his friend took office, Knox became his secretary, a position which he retained throughout the whole period of the Rebellion and of the Union controversy. Three years older than his patron, Knox was already a thoughtful and mature student of politics when he first came into practical touch with them. He had been at the outset of the popular agitation, in his own words, 'a sincere and zealous advocate for a limited Parliamentary reform,' and a sympathiser with the then views of Grattan and the Whig Club. But he was from the first alarmed by the methods of the United

Irishmen, and being early convinced that any measure of reform conceded to the importunities of a revolutionary organisation must lead to consequences incompatible with the maintenance of the Constitution, he had become an unqualified supporter of the Government, and his influence not improbably weighed much in determining Castlereagh's own transition from Whig to Tory views. Surveying Irish politics in the spirit of the old Whigs, Knox had, in 1794, published a pamphlet, entitled 'Thoughts on the Will of the People,' in which he analysed the causes of the failure of the Revolution to give ordered liberty to France; while in 1795 he had published a series of 'Essays on the Political Circumstances of Ireland,' in which the true inwardness of the United Irish movement was exhibited with remarkable acumen, long before the danger had been substantiated by the Reports of the Secret Parliamentary Committees, of the most instructive of which, that of the Irish House of Commons in 1798, Knox was himself to be the author. That Castlereagh's eulogies of the disinterestedness of his subordinate were well founded may be inferred from the fact that Knox neither sought nor accepted reward for his political services. He had spent his boyhood at the feet of Wesley, whose teaching had aroused in him a passion for religious speculation which ultimately absorbed all other interests; and almost simultaneously with the passing of the Union he had fallen under the religious influences which were to dominate his subsequent career. Abandoning politics, he gave himself up to the theological discussions which are so fully set forth in the once well-known 'Correspondence of Knox and Bishop Jebb;' and recent criticism has found in the speculations of this subtle and ingenious intellect the spark from which was fired the torch that, handed from Knox to Jebb, from Jebb to Hugh James Rose, and from Rose to Keble and Newman, kindled the flames of the Oxford Movement.<sup>1</sup> But unfortunately, when, in 1811,

<sup>1</sup> See the notice of Knox in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and two very interesting articles by the late Professor Geo. Stokes, of Trinity College, Dublin, in the *Contemporary Review* for 1888.

Castlereagh sought to charge him with a task for which he was, in point of knowledge, of all men then living, the best fitted, Knox was in enfeebled health, and tortured by a curious distrust of his own abilities, which led him to decline it. The Rebellion of 1798 thus lost its best chance of finding an efficient historian.

The two most commonly received impressions in regard to the origin and objects of the Rebellion are both equally and most strangely contrary to the facts of the case. Upon the one hand, the idea generally entertained by persons who have not inquired into the subject is that the Rebellion was a rising prompted by the discontent engendered by the harsh operation of the penal laws, and that the sole motive force which rendered it formidable was the zeal of religious fanaticism. Upon the other hand, it is alleged that, great as was the prevalent popular discontent occasioned by religious oppression, the Rebellion would never have broken out but for the vindictive policy pursued by the Government, and the terrible severity of the coercive measures adopted for the purpose of rooting out the United Irish conspiracy. Neither view, perhaps, can be said to be wholly false, yet, as an explanation of the outbreak, nothing can be more ludicrously inadequate. Indubitably, when the insurrection had once taken place, religious intolerance had much to do with the form which it assumed, and resentment at the severity of the *régime* of martial law which had preceded it served to aggravate the ferocity of the insurgents. But neither the harshness of the penal laws, nor the severity with which the Executive Government strove to suppress illegal combinations, could of themselves have produced the Rebellion. The Rebellion of 1798 was not, as in English popular imagination it has long appeared, a sort of eighteenth-century repetition of the Gunpowder Treason. It did not originate in a Roman Catholic plot. As little was it provoked by the strong measures of the Government. The circumstances that the outbreak followed closely upon those measures, and that, in the counties in which it reached the most formidable proportions, it assumed the appearance and



character of a religious crusade, render both assumptions very natural ; but these coincidences, however striking, had little to do with the real causes of the Rebellion. We have seen on the contrary that, so far from drawing its inspiration from Celtic and Catholic Ireland, from the wrongs of a conquered people or a proscribed creed, the real source of the treasonable conspiracy out of which the Rebellion grew was the Protestant province of Ulster ; and that, so far from being occasioned by the tyrannous coercion of the Government or the cruelties of the soldiery, the insurrection was most formidable where the Government had been least active, and where the greatest indulgence had been shown.

In order to form anything like a just conception of the Ireland of a hundred years ago, it is necessary to survey briefly the state of Irish politics during, and even prior to, the era of the Grattan Parliament. And the first point to be noted, with respect more particularly to the third quarter of the eighteenth century, is the profound calm which prevailed throughout Ireland, and the at least negative loyalty of the mass of the people. Whether because of the hopelessness of effecting any real change for the better under a dependent Parliament which was the creature of English ministers, or because, as was certainly the case, the degrading inequalities contained in the Statute Books did not press with much actual severity upon the great body of the inhabitants, Ireland, both north and south of the Boyne, was in a condition of not unprosperous tranquillity. Local and passing disturbances there were, of course. In the southern districts discontent at the conversion of tillage land to pasture, with a resulting diminution in the demand for agricultural labour, gave rise to the Whiteboy societies ; and in the north the outrages perpetrated by the 'Hearts of Oak' and 'Hearts of Steel' were stimulated by the hardships of local taxation, and by the exaction of heavy fines at the fall of the leases on certain estates. But these disturbances represented no general dissatisfaction ; and an active and sincere loyalty prevailed throughout the island. In 1759 the reality of that sentiment in Ulster had been

conspicuously proved on the occasion of a French descent upon the coast of Antrim, and the landing of Thurot at Carrickfergus. And a few years later the zeal of the Roman Catholics of the south for the integrity of the empire was illustrated by the success which attended recruiting operations to provide troops for the defence of the American colonies. Again, when in 1778 the junction of the privateers of the revolted colonies with the naval power of France exposed the coast of Ireland to imminent danger of invasion, the people of Belfast and its neighbourhood coalesced to provide for their homes and their commerce the protection which the Irish Government confessed itself unable to afford, and, adopting a military organisation, raised the first companies of the afterwards celebrated Volunteers.

This being the state of the island prior to the concession of legislative independence, it is natural to inquire what was the provocation which, within a dozen years, could produce the widely different condition of popular sentiment from which the Rebellion emanated. Here indeed the suggestion of religious oppression as an explanation of the altered situation begins to assume a greater semblance of reality ; yet it will be found that the Catholic question played a very subordinate part in the movement which led up to the insurrection. The agitation, upon the strength of which the Volunteers wrested the concession of legislative independence from the despairing weakness of British statesmen, had nothing whatever to do with the wrongs of Roman Catholics. Irish independence was won on a fiscal agitation, and was desired for the benefits which it was supposed that the fiscal legislation of a native parliament would be able to confer upon the country. From the year 1783 down to 1790, the Roman Catholic question was little heard of outside Parliament, and was scarcely mentioned within it. The object which the Volunteer Convention set before it was not Catholic Emancipation, but Parliamentary Reform, and down to the outbreak of the French Revolution little or no progress had been made, even outside Parliament, with either article in what subsequently became the creed of the

United Irishmen. From the date of the rejection of Flood's Reform Bill, at the close of 1783, the reform agitation slept, and the Catholic question was scarcely mooted. In point of fact, indeed, the introduction of the Catholic question by the Bishop of Derry was the real cause of the dissolution of the Volunteer Convention.

Although, in July 1784, the Volunteers of Ulster expressed 'their satisfaction at the decay of those prejudices which had so long involved the nation in feud and disunion, a disunion which, by limiting the rights of suffrage, had in a great degree fostered the aristocratic tyranny, the source of every grievance,' the majority of the Ulstermen deferred to the entreaties of the Earl of Charlemont, who, though he professed himself 'free from every illiberal prejudice against the Catholics,' entreated his followers 'to desist from a pursuit which would fatally impede the prosecution of their favourite object.' The National Congress summoned by Napper Tandy equally failed to unite the members of the Volunteer Associations in favour of a common programme of reform and emancipation. The oil of Roman Catholic Emancipation could not be mixed with the water of Parliamentary Reform. For five years there was a practical cessation of agitation. Almost the whole period of the Viceroyalty of the Duke of Rutland, which lasted from the spring of 1784 to the autumn of 1787, was occupied with other and widely different questions: while during the greater part of the administration of the Marquis of Buckingham the Regency controversy, occasioned by the first appearance of insanity in George III., occupied the attention of the Irish Parliament and people to the exclusion of almost every other topic.

The revival of the twin movement dates absolutely from the outbreak of the French Revolution. The tidal wave produced by that great upheaval nowhere produced more remarkable effects than in Ireland, and particularly in Ulster. In the capital of that province the outbreak of the popular forces in France was greeted with an enthusiasm of democratic fervour in startling contrast with the loyal and constitutional sentiments which had previously prevailed in

the north. On the 14th July, 1791, the inhabitants of Belfast met to celebrate the anniversary of the Revolution, and *feux-de-joie* were fired by the remnants of the Volunteer corps who assembled on the occasion. In the year following, the same anniversary was observed as a sort of popular festival. Emblematic figures, including portraits of Lafayette and Franklin, were drawn through the streets in solemn procession, addresses were voted to the National Assembly of France, and resolutions were passed bracketing Catholic Emancipation with Parliamentary Reform as objects of equal interest and importance.

To account for the rapidity with which this change in the attitude of the leading spirits in Ulster politics had been brought about, it is necessary to remember the effect naturally and inevitably produced in Ulster by the revolt of the American colonies and the recognition of the independence of the United States by Great Britain. Between the people of the new republic of the West and the Presbyterians of Ulster there was a close affinity in blood, in religion, and in political sentiment. Many of the people of Belfast had near relatives in the ranks of the armies which had won independence for America, and the sympathy with the efforts of the colonists thus naturally produced was soon extended to the principles for which the colonists contended. Years before the French Revolution broke out, republican principles had thus won a large measure of popular assent, and when the successful assertion of those principles in France appeared to herald the reign of democracy in the old world as well as in the new, there was no lack of disciples for the gospel of a democratic Ireland which the more ardent spirits among them at once began to preach. It is an unquestionable and demonstrable fact that, but for the feeling in the north in favour of a democratic reform of Parliament, to effect which the more speedily the Ulster Protestant leaders bethought themselves of the expedient of a union with the Roman Catholic advocates of emancipation, the latter object would never have attained a prominent position in Irish politics during the period of the Irish Parliament, or at any

rate that its supporters would have been content to accept a very limited and partial measure of enfranchisement. During the earlier stages of the United Irish movement, fears were constantly expressed by the Protestant members of the partnership lest the Roman Catholics should acquiesce in a partial and limited concession, and lest the Parliamentary reformers of the north should thus be deprived of Catholic assistance. In his contribution to *Pieces of Irish History*, Thomas Addis Emmet intimates that even John Keogh, the Catholic leader, was not disinclined in 1792 to accept the concession of the elective franchise and the repeal of the Catholic laws relating to juries as a not insufficient satisfaction of Catholic demands. Throughout the whole eight years of agitation which preceded the Rebellion the Ulster Protestants were the predominant partners in the United Irish alliance, and the power which really made the movement formidable. All the information which has become available in the century which has since elapsed does not render it possible to state the facts upon this point more accurately than they were set forth by Alexander Knox two months after the conclusion of the Rebellion, in the preface to a collected edition of his *‘Essays on the Political Circumstances of Ireland:’*—

Still, however, the author must deem those persons mistaken who conceive the Irish Union to have been originally a Roman Catholic plot. He thinks the erroneousness of such a supposition will fully appear from the following pages. The attentive reader will find sufficient proof that the primary object of the United Irishmen was strictly and exclusively Revolutionary Democracy; and that though, from the first moment of their institution, they regarded the religious disaffection of the Irish Catholics as the chief instrument of their design, and the surest pledge of their success, it was uniformly their object to make Religion subservient to Jacobinism, and not Jacobinism to Religion.

That these views are scarcely, if at all, an exaggeration appears from the facts that while the insurrectionary organisation of the United Irishmen was fully developed in the Protestant counties of Ulster it made comparatively



little progress in the more Catholic counties of the northern province, such as Donegal and Cavan; that of the four provinces, Munster was the least organised, so much so that when, in December 1796, Hoche's invasion threatened the safety of Ireland, the Roman Catholics of Cork, far from welcoming the prospect, exhibited an active loyalty; that the higher orders of the Catholic clergy exerted themselves vigorously and often effectively in favour of the Government; and that the only counties outside Ulster which were fully prepared beforehand for insurrection were those of Dublin and the adjacent counties of Kildare, Meath, and Westmeath. A survey of all the facts in the light of the fullest information which the research of Mr. Lecky and other students has provided, compels acquiescence in the conclusions proclaimed as long ago as 1808 by Sir Henry Parnell in his history of the Penal Laws, viz.: 1. That the persons who were the founders of the Rebellion were those who formed the first societies of United Irishmen, who were all Protestants. 2. That the object of the leaders of the Rebellion was a republican form of government, and separation from England, and not Catholic Emancipation or the establishment of the Catholic religion. Had the Rebellion broken out in 1797, as the northern leaders desired, and as, but for the restraint put upon them by the Dublin Committee, it would then have broken out, it is not too much to say that it would have been as much a Protestant Rebellion as it was subsequently transformed into a Catholic one.

Of the explanations and excuses most commonly put forward by apologists of the Rebellion, perhaps the most familiar are those which represent the United Irish Society as having been formed for purely constitutional purposes, and as entirely devoid of treasonable intentions in the earlier stages of its development, and which further represent the transition from constitutional agitation to treasonable conspiracy. from treasonable conspiracy to armed rebellion, as having been produced solely by the brutal excesses which the soldiery, militia, and yeomanry were guilty of in carrying out the orders of an oppressive

Government. The latter charge has, indeed, been pressed even further, and posterity has been gravely invited to believe that the cruelties complained of were not merely unproved by the authorities, but were advisedly prompted by them with the object of goading the people into an insurrection in order to provide a justification for the Union. In view of the apotheosis of the Rebellion and its authors, and of the hearty endorsement of its separatist objects which is to be found in the writings of so many historians of the movement, the formal demonstration of the groundlessness of these charges may be thought superfluous. But as these same historians have, with extraordinary inconsistency, repeated and enforced these charges in the same breath in which they have eulogised the martyrs of rebellion as the leaders of a spontaneous movement, those representations can scarcely be passed by in silence. When even such frankly Separatist writers as John Mitchel and Dr. Madden have not been above repeating these insinuations, notwithstanding that, if well founded, the fact would deprive their heroes of one of their chief claims for the admiration that is demanded for their aims, it is to be supposed that they seriously believe them. These charges have been adopted, too, in all their naked ugliness by an English historian of the Rebellion with some pretensions to impartiality. Mr. Harwood, in his account of the Rebellion published in 1845, actually attributes to the Government 'a deliberate policy of exasperation, a determination to get up a rebellion for the sake of putting it down.'

The attachment of popular writers to these time-honoured fictions is probably due to the fact that they were originally put forward with the official seal of the United Irish leaders themselves, in the 'Memoir of the Origin and Progress of the Irish Union' delivered to the Government by Messrs. Emmet, O'Connor, and McNevin, three members of the United Irish Executive, and insinuated in the account of the objects of the organisation given by these leaders in the course of their respective examinations before the Committees of the Irish Houses of Parliament in August

1798. The apologist theory of the United Irish organisation is thus stated in the 'Memoir':<sup>1</sup>—

The disunion that had long existed between the Catholics and Protestants of Ireland, particularly those of the Presbyterian religion, was found by experience to be so great an obstacle to the obtaining a reform in Parliament on anything of just and popular principles, that some persons equally friendly to that measure and to religious toleration conceived the idea of uniting both sects in pursuance of the same object—a repeal of the penal laws and a reform including in itself an extension of the right of suffrage to the Catholic. From this originated the societies of the United Irishmen in the end of the year 1791; even then it was clearly perceived that the chief support of the borough interest in Ireland was the weight of English influence; but as yet that obvious remark had not led the minds of the reformers towards a separation from England. Some individuals, perhaps, had convinced themselves that benefit would result to this country from such a measure: but during the whole existence of the Society of United Irishmen of Dublin we may safely aver, to the best of our knowledge and recollections, that no such object was ever agitated by its members, either in public debate or private conversation, nor until the society had lasted a considerable time were any traces of republicanism to be met with there; its views were purely and in good faith what the test of the society avows.

The 'Memoir' goes on to assert that separation never became an active principle with any of its members till after the dissolution of the Society of United Irishmen in Dublin in 1794, and the consequent promulgation of the secret organisation which was at once substituted for the suppressed body:—

While the formation of these societies was in agitation (so the 'Memoir' proceeds), the friends of liberty were gradually, but with a timid step, advancing towards republicanism; they began to be convinced that it would be as easy to obtain a revolution as a reform, so obstinately was the latter resisted, and as the conviction impressed itself on their minds they were inclined not to give up the struggle, but to extend their views; it was for this reason that in their test the words are 'an equal representation of all the people of

<sup>1</sup> *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 174.

Ireland,' without inserting the word Parliament. The test embraced both the republican and the reformer, and left to future circumstances to decide to which the common strength should be directed; but still the whole body, we are convinced, would stop short at reform.<sup>1</sup>

In the volume of 'Pieces of Irish History' published several years after in America, Emmet insists upon this distinction in principle between the United Irishmen of 1791 and those of 1794 and 1795, asserting the completely separate identity of the secret and the avowed Society, and averring that the 'erroneous belief that the new system was only a direct continuation of the old one' was due only to the identity in the titles of the two distinct organisations; and he goes on to attribute the triumph of the republican over the constitutional elements in the Society to the discontent engendered by the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam. One other important element the Memoir admits to have largely influenced the plans of the associates. This was the war with France.

They [the United Irishmen] clearly perceived that their strength was not likely to become speedily equal to wresting from the English and the borough interest in Ireland even a reform; foreign assistance would therefore perhaps become necessary; but foreign assistance could only be hoped for in proportion as the object to which it would be applied was important to the party giving it. A reform in the Irish Parliament was no object to the French—a separation of Ireland from England was a mighty one indeed.<sup>2</sup>

Even if it be granted that this account by the Dublin members of the executive of the objects of the Society as known to them is candid and veracious, it is to be observed that it presents only a very partial and fragmentary view of the facts; for since, as the 'Memoir' states, none of its three authors were members of the United system until September or October 1796, the latter were obviously not the persons most competent to answer for its earlier ideals. Their disclaimer can therefore at best apply no further than to themselves. But there is no lack of evidence from other authoritative sources to prove the large part which separatist

<sup>1</sup> *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* p. 177.



objects played in the contemplation of the first founders of the system. The diary and autobiography of a much more thorough-going revolutionist than any of the authors of the 'Memoir' is conclusive as to the true animus of those who invented the organisation, and its own official documents afford the clearest evidence that the separatist ideas were not confined to the breasts of a few leading spirits, but were fully appreciated by the members generally. The vigorous common sense of Lord Clare first laid bare the falsehood of the pretence put forward by the apologists of treason in the Irish Parliament by fastening on an explicit avowal of his real objects by the true parent of the United Irish system, Theobald Wolfe Tone, contained in a letter written in 1791, accompanying the original constitution of the United Irish Society as transmitted to Belfast for adoption. In amplification of the grievance set forth in his formal plan of the constitution, that 'we have no National Government; we are ruled by Englishmen and the servants of Englishmen,' Tone remarked to his correspondent:—

The foregoing contain my true and sincere opinion of the state of this country, *so far as in the present juncture it may be advisable to publish it*. They certainly fall short of the truth, but truth itself must sometimes condescend to temporise; my unalterable conviction is that the bane of Irish prosperity is the influence of England. I believe that influence will ever be extended while the connection between the countries continues; nevertheless, as I know that opinion is, *for the present*, too hasty, though a very little time may establish it universally, I have not made it a part of the resolutions. I have only proposed to set up a reformed parliament as a barrier against that mischief which every honest man that will open his eyes must see in every instance overbears the interest of Ireland. I have not said one word that looks like a wish for separation, though I give it to you and your friends as my most decided opinion, that such an event would be a regeneration to this country.<sup>1</sup>

With still more candour and much greater deliberation does the inventor of the conspiracy set forth, in the pages of his Autobiography written at Paris in 1796, 'the theory I have unvaryingly acted on ever since:—

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, 1797.*



To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country, these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in the place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter, these were my means.<sup>1</sup>

Tone saw that only by bringing together the Dissenters and the Roman Catholics could this design be accomplished, and thus it was with this object and this alone in view that this extraordinary and most original of conspirators, totally unconnected with the Roman Catholic party (with not a single individual in whose body was he acquainted at the time), but aiming to forge a weapon strong enough to wrest Ireland from Great Britain, sat down to compose his 'Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland.' In this pamphlet the Dissenters were bidden to observe that they and the Catholics had but one common interest, and one common enemy; that the depression and slavery of Ireland were produced and perpetuated by the divisions subsisting between them, and that to assert the independence of their country they must forget their former feuds. They were reminded that the failure of all former efforts at Parliamentary reform, and especially that of the Volunteer Convention of 1783, had been due to the unjust neglect of the claims of their Roman Catholic brethren.

The second of the two charges against the Irish Government rests, like the pretended constitutionalism of the United Irish movement, upon certain passages in the examinations of Emmet and McNevin, and in the joint 'Memoir.' In the latter document the writers aver that no general plan of insurrection existed before the 12th of March, 1798, though they admit that some persons had formed local plans for the taking of Dublin and other places. At the examination before the House of Lords Committee, Emmet was asked by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Clare :—

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Wolfe Tone*, vol. i. p. 51 (Washington edition).

‘Pray, Mr. Emmet, what caused the late insurrection?’ He answered, ‘The free quarters, the house-burnings, the tortures, and the military executions in the counties of Kildare, Carlow, and Wicklow.’ ‘Don’t you think,’ he was further asked, ‘the arrests of the 12th of March caused it?’ He replied, ‘No; but I believe if it had not been for those arrests it would not have taken place; for the people, irritated by what they suffered, had been long pressing the executive to consent to an insurrection, but they had resisted or eluded it, and were determined to persevere in the same line; after these arrests, however, other persons came forward, who were irritated and thought differently, who consented to let that partial insurrection take place.’<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to speak with patience of the credulity which has accepted, or of the dishonesty which has put forward, these answers of Emmet and his colleagues as seriously amounting to a proof that the insurrection would not have taken place, nay even would not have been attempted, but for the indignation aroused by the coercive measures of the Government. The most cursory examination of the ‘Memoir’ and the evidence of the witnesses themselves, apart from abundant extraneous testimony, prove in the plainest manner that their answers amount to no more than an expression of the preference of the United Irish leaders for invasion as distinguished from insurrection. That preference, it is well known, was uniformly exhibited by the Dublin leaders, whose *non possumus* had in 1797 prevented the rising for which the Ulster leaders were prepared, and who had the effrontery in their examinations to avow this preference on the ground that an invasion would be the more humane method of the two.

‘If I imagined,’ said Emmet, ‘that an insurrection could have succeeded without a great deal of waste of blood and time, I should have preferred it to an invasion, as it would not have exposed us to the chance of contributions being required by a foreign force; but as I did not think so, and as I was certain an invasion would succeed speedily, and without much struggle, I preferred it, even at the hazard of that inconvenience which we took every pains to prevent.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* p. 218.

McNevin's evidence was to the like effect. Asked what had prevented the rising in the north from taking place in 1797, he answered that the Ulster men desisted in consequence of assurances of immediate succour from France and of representations of the unwisdom of giving England an advantage by beginning before the army of invasion had arrived. To the question—

‘If you thought you would have succeeded, you would have begun?’ he frankly answered: ‘Most probably we should; at the same time, I am bound to declare that it was our wish to act with French aid, because that would tend to make the revolution less bloody, by determining many to join it early who, while the balance of success was doubtful, would either retain an injurious neutrality, or even perhaps oppose it.’<sup>1</sup>

Much capital is sought to be made, in popular versions of the insurrection, of a passage in the Report of the Secret Committee of 1798, in which it was stated ‘that the rebellion would not have broken out as soon as it did had it not been for the well-timed measures adopted by Government;’ and further, that ‘from the vigorous and summary expedients resorted to by Government, and the consequent exertions of the military, the leaders found themselves reduced to the alternative of immediate insurrection.’ A phrase used by Lord Castlereagh in the course of McNevin's examination, ‘You acknowledge the Union would have become stronger but for the means taken to make it explode,’ is also relied on as evidence of a deep-laid plot to incite to insurrection a peaceably disposed and law-abiding people. The contention gravely put forward appears to be that Government, with the information it possessed, knowing as it did through its informers that the United Irish Executive was waiting for the expected invasion, and patiently perfecting its organisation in the meantime, should have stood by with folded hands, and taken no steps to interfere with the benevolent desire of the conspirators to effect a bloodless revolution.

The evidence to which we have adverted is abundantly

<sup>1</sup> *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 197.

sufficient to rebut the feeble repudiation of Emmet and his comrades, and the language of Knox, in the preface from which we have already quoted, in no wise exaggerates the case :—

No fact can be more established than that the Society of United Irishmen, from the first moment of its institution, has been, with respect to its leading members, a band of systematic traitors ; that no possible means would have been adequate to their suppression but the most unremitting coercion, and the most vigorous resistance ; and that nothing can be more insolently false than to represent them as having been provoked into treason by those strong measures on the part of the Government, which were then only resorted to when both the common sense and common safety of the country irresistibly demanded them.’<sup>1</sup>

While the proved facts of history forbid the acceptance of any less harsh estimate of the actual motives and ulterior aims of the founders of the movement than that which has just been quoted, it is of course no less true that the revolutionary fervour of the leaders was not fully shared by all who joined the ranks of the United Irish Society. Particularly was this the case in Ulster, where considerable differences of opinion manifested themselves from the very first, and where those whose sympathy with the Roman Catholics was not prompted by a purely utilitarian desire to use them as a means of separation from Great Britain were far from hearty in their acceptance of an alliance which was foreign to all the traditions of Ulster, both social and religious. And in point of fact it is to this imperfect sympathy between the bulk of the members of the two sections, as distinguished from their leaders, coupled with the abhorrence created in Protestant breasts by the excesses of their Catholic allies in Wicklow and Wexford, that the failure of the insurrection is to be ascribed. The various shades of Protestant opinion in Ulster, and the process by which the vehement admirers of theoretical democracy and of the French Revolution were converted into no less vehement upholders of the Constitution, have never been better analysed than in some early letters

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on the Political Circumstances of Ireland*, preface, p. xi.

of Castlereagh, written while the future Chief Secretary was still a very young man, and before he had discarded the Liberalism which he has been so fiercely reviled for deserting. Before referring to these views it may not be out of place to try to recall in some detail the figure of one who played a foremost part in the Ireland of the Rebellion, and played it with results so advantageous to his own political career, though, thanks to the relentless hostility of Irish writers, so unhappy for his reputation with posterity.

It has been the lot of few among British statesmen to play a more conspicuous part in the history of the Empire than that which was filled for close on a quarter of a century by Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh ; and, of those few, still fewer have left as enduring a mark on both the domestic constitution and the external relations of Great Britain. Yet in the whole roll of British ministers none has been less fortunate in respect of posthumous fame. For the greater part of his career Castlereagh occupied, first in College Green and afterwards at Westminster, the most eminent parliamentary position. It has been the lot of no other statesman to be the leader of the House of Commons in the Parliaments of two kingdoms : and Castlereagh not only commanded the allegiance but acquired the confidence of both. Of his career in Dublin Lord Cornwallis writes in 1800, that ‘ he has improved so much as a speaker as to become nearly master of the House of Commons,’ and tells, in language that now sounds strange, how ‘ the gratification of national pride which the Irish feel at the prospect of his making a figure in the great political world has much diminished the unpopularity which his cold and distant manners in private society have produced.’ Of the position he occupied at Westminster, a political opponent and unfriendly critic—Earl Russell—wrote, after a parliamentary experience of sixty years, that he had never known two men who had more influence with the House of Commons than Lords Castlereagh and Althorp. Yet though he was, with only a brief interruption, for twenty years a minister of the first rank ; though he was the successful competitor against the



most brilliant politician of his day for the leadership of the Tory party in the Lower House ; and though, while holding that lead continuously for ten years in the face of a formidable opposition, he was the chosen representative of Great Britain at Congresses which settled the map of Europe, Castlereagh's name scarcely counts among the great names that stand as landmarks in the political history of the nineteenth century.

The comparative oblivion into which the reputation and services of Castlereagh have fallen in Great Britain is remarkable, but it is not inexplicable. For though a great party-leader, and a great executive minister, he was never, and never essayed to be, a teacher of men, or one who knew how to impregnate an old party with a modern spirit, as Canning and Disraeli at different epochs have known how to do. Neither was there about him that subtle personal magnetism which communicates itself to other and opposite natures, inspiring a following, in spite of itself, with the spirit of its leader. Nor, again, had he the animation, the daring, the *élan* which enables a Rupert of Debate, at the head of an enthusiastic minority, to carry and for a time to hold the citadels of the majority. Cold, in his calm and imperturbable dignity, he cared little for the applause of his associates. The plaudits of the mob he despised. When, towards the close of his career, after an absence of twenty years, he accompanied his sovereign to Dublin in 1821, he was greeted in the theatre and at the Mansion House with rounds of cheering, the audience in each case rising to receive him ; while the Dublin mob, volatile as the Parisian, in the curious enthusiasm of the royal visit, embarrassed his movements in the streets by attempting to chair the contriver of the Union. But the enthusiasm was irksome to him, and his comment is characteristic. 'I am grown,' he said, 'as popular in 1821 as unpopular formerly, and with as little merit ; and of the two unpopularity is the more convenient and gentlemanlike.' Such was his invariable attitude. No one, indeed, knew better the importance of conciliatory manners and a gracious demeanour, and in the

management of the House of Commons no one has ever taken greater pains to attract confidence by that appearance of deferential consideration which is never so captivating as when vouchsafed by superior to subordinate. But this he did as it were mechanically, as incidental to his position and with a certain aloofness :—

Stately in quiet high-bred self-esteem,  
Fair as the Lovelace of a lady's dream,<sup>1</sup>

he performed all the duties of a leader thoroughly and effectively, but with a sort of aristocratic reserve and disdain which forbade the intimacy of his followers, while his assured nonchalance commanded their confidence.

It may be said, too, that Castlereagh was conspicuously deficient in certain qualities and talents, which, though not essential, as many instances combine to prove, to a commanding position in Parliament, are yet among the natural and appropriate graces of a statesman. He had neither wide reading nor much general information. He had not the advantage of a public-school training, and his University career lasted little more than a year. Above all, he was no orator. Though not incapable of flashes of natural eloquence, his efforts at rhetoric were laboured and uninteresting. Wellington said of him that he could do everything but speak in Parliament. And though he was always listened to with the attention due to a man who speaks with knowledge, authority, and native good sense, his extraordinary metaphors and his Irish bulls long provided topics and targets for the sarcasm of political opponents and the shafts of party wits. Brougham's description of him as incapable of uttering two sentences of anything but in the meanest manner and in the most wretched language, is no doubt a malicious exaggeration of this defect ; for Greville, a more impartial, though far from good-natured critic, avers that despite the ridicule which his extraordinary phraseology exposed him to, Castlereagh never spoke ill, and always left much to his opponents to answer. But Moore was only

<sup>1</sup> Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's *St. Stephen's*.

quoting his actual expressions when he made Phil Fudge address Castlereagh thus:—

Where (still to use your Lordship's tropes)  
The level of obedience slopes  
Upwards and downwards, as the stream  
Of hydra-faction kicks the beam.

It was not unfair to describe as a 'Malaprop Cicero'<sup>1</sup> a speaker who could be guilty of such absurdities.

Despite these defects, however, the tendency has latterly been towards a more just estimate of the character, capacity, and services of Castlereagh. The exertions of his biographer and of the editor of his papers did little at first to improve his reputation, and indeed his fame was rather obscured than served by the epistolary pyramid which the devotion of his brother erected on his grave. The 'Memoirs and Correspondence' were too staid and massive to be interesting to contemporaries who desired the personalities and anecdotes which make biography acceptable. But, like the pyramids, these memorials have gained in interest with the lapse of time, and have become, at a distance of nigh three quarters of a century, part of the history of the nation. From them the student may judge of the capacity and character which early won the friendship of Wellington and the confidence of Pitt. Tried by the test of time and by comparison with more showy, but less cool and resolute contemporaries, Castlereagh is beginning to take his proper place in the grateful recollection of a people who are learning to recognise how, in the greatest crisis of its fate,

Far ends in Pitt's deep thought  
By him, if rudely, were securely wrought.<sup>2</sup>

In one part of the United Kingdom, however, it is still otherwise. In Ireland his memory is not forgotten; and in the popular estimate of his character there has been no fluctuation. There the name of Castlereagh has been execrated for a century with a uniformity of unalloyed

<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh's well-known entreaty to the country gentlemen 'not to turn their backs upon themselves' is among the most perfect examples of an Irish bull.

<sup>2</sup> Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's *St. Stephen's*.

obloquy. 'The irreconcilable passion of unchangeable hate,' which, in the language of a modern patriot, is the feeling with which the majority of Irishmen regard England, describes without much exaggeration the attitude of Ireland towards the statesman who suppressed the Rebellion and carried the Union. Even now, in his native land, the character of Castlereagh continues to be assailed with all that wealth of vituperation which is never so freely lavished by Irishmen as when it is employed to blacken the reputation of one of their own countrymen of an opposite political faction. To them Castlereagh is, in Byron's language—

A wretch never named but with curses and jeers.

O'Connell described him as the Assassin of his country. Moore exults, as he addresses England in 'The Fudge Family'—

That 'twas an Irish head, an Irish heart  
Made thee the fall'n and tarnished thing thou art,

and speaks of the 'worst infections' of his country as 'all condensed in him.' English poets writing under Irish inspiration are, if possible, more severe:—

I met Murder on his way,  
He had a mask like Castlereagh,

said Shelley in his 'Masque of Anarchy.' Later writers in his own country have compared him to Robespierre, 'whose memory has about it the faint and sickening smell of hot blood.' These epithets, and a score of others equally uncomplimentary, have caused Castlereagh to assume in the popular imagination the likeness of some fiend, filled with a bloodthirsty animosity to his countrymen, and gloating over the degradation and misfortunes he had himself contributed to inflict upon her. Yet, according to the universal testimony of those who acted with him in public, and were intimate with him in private, no estimate was further from the truth. The gentler estimate of Irish patriots who knew the man is entirely forgotten or ignored.

No doubt Castlereagh was, in the language of Brougham, a bold, fearless man, brave politically as well as personally,

who went straight to his point.' And that point was, in the first great episode of his career, the destruction of what are called the liberties of Ireland. Much may on that account be forgiven to the indignant feelings of ardent patriots, who may be excused for an inability to see in the destroyer of their political temples and the gods they adored anything but a ferocious iconoclast. Yet it is scarcely permissible for even the enthusiasm of angry patriotism to ignore the dispassionate testimony of Castlereagh's political antagonists, and of Irish patriot leaders. When he is accused of having provoked the Rebellion in order to put it down, it is fair to remember that his persistent detractor, Brougham, has not only acquitted him of the charge, but has declared that Castlereagh set himself in opposition to those who procured the retirement of Abercromby, and tried to drive out Cornwallis as too humane in their treatment of a treasonable conspiracy. When he is charged with petty jealousy of great patriots, it is not to be forgotten that he prevented the insertion in the Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons on the Rebellion of passages tending to implicate Grattan in the United Irish conspiracy. And when he is represented as ruthlessly trampling on the religious liberties of his countrymen, let it be remembered that he was throughout his career, and often in circumstances when advocacy of the cause was disadvantageous to his own prospects, the steady friend of Catholic Emancipation. The statesman who, even after he joined the Government, retained the affection of Charlemont, cannot have been by nature either a brute or a villain. And no Irishman can refuse to hearken to the testimony in which the dying Grattan pronounced a touching vindication of his former foe—'Don't be hard on Castlereagh ; he loves his country.'<sup>1</sup>

Much light is thrown upon the evolution of political opinion among the Irish aristocracy and upper classes in the

<sup>1</sup> 'The Union is passed ; the business between him and me is over, and it is for the interest of Ireland that Lord Castlereagh should be Minister. I beg you again not to attack him unless he attacks you, and I make it my dying request.'—*Grattan's Life*, vol. v.



closing years of the eighteenth century by following the early career of Castlereagh. It may, therefore, be well to glance briefly at the circumstances of his origin, and the state of the political atmosphere by which he was surrounded when in 1790 he first entered the Irish Parliament as member for the county Down. The father of the future Minister, Robert Stewart, of Mount Pleasant, now Mount Stewart, in the county Down, was himself for many years the representative of the county in which his property was situated. Identifying himself with the popular or Whig interest, in opposition to the great family of the Downshires, the elder Stewart had, by the year 1789, acquired a character for integrity and independence which was not forfeited when, having increased his importance by aristocratic alliances, he was raised to the peerage as Baron Londonderry, probably through the influence of Lord Camden, the father of his second wife. He was the friend and colleague of Charlemont, in whose autobiography Stewart is mentioned as 'a gentleman of the best character and most patriotic,' and was also an active supporter of the Volunteer movement, representing his county in the Convention of 1783. The first of two great matches by which Robert Stewart the elder accelerated his rise to eminence was his marriage with Sarah Frances, daughter of the first Marquis of Hertford. Of this union Castlereagh was the eldest son. Lady Sarah died while the future statesman was still a mere child; but she left her son the inheritance of the stately grace of the Seymours, and the features and presence which Lawrence was proud to paint, as well as the advantage of a family relationship which powerfully aided him in his political career. The second wife of Robert Stewart was the means of instituting a connection of even greater value to her stepson. Lady Frances Pratt was the daughter of Lord Chancellor Camden, the friend and colleague of Pitt, and was the sister of the Viceroy under whom Castlereagh first served as Chief Secretary.

Among the few recorded incidents of young Robert Stewart's boyhood one is worth mentioning for its bearing on

his future career, and the evidence it affords of the feelings he inspired in those among whom his early years were passed. In the 'Narrative' by the Presbyterian minister of Portaferry, written twenty years later, when the writer, who in 1798 had been imprisoned as a United Irishman, had travelled far from the boy hero of his earlier hopes, the following picture is given of the youthful Castlereagh as he appeared in 1782 at a review of the Volunteer forces at Belfast, when he took the field at the head of a company of light infantry in the regiment of which his father was colonel :—

In a sham fight the day after the Review, Robert Stewart, now Lord Viscount Castlereagh, then only in his thirteenth year, commanded the light infantry of the Ards Independents. His company consisted mostly of boys a few years older than himself. Their appearance attracted universal notice, and excited the most pleasing emotions, as it promised a succession of patriot soldiers under whose banners Ireland would recline in safety. The conduct of young Stewart did more. The manner in which he conducted his boyish band through the variegated and long-protracted engagement displayed such genius of spirit and judgment as excited admiration, extorted applause, and laid the foundation of that popularity which he afterwards obtained. . . . This circumstance had a powerful effect on the ardent minds of the multitude present; and their account of it excited high expectations of and a warm attachment to the rising Robert throughout the entire country. From that day many began to look forward to and to speak of him as their future representative. 'If such be the boy, what may we not expect from the man?' was to be heard in almost every company; and I own that my own expectations were as extravagant and my attachment as enthusiastic as those of any man living.<sup>1</sup>

It was thus, as the heir of a nobleman of property and high station and as a popular young country gentleman, that in the year 1790 Castlereagh came forward as a candidate for the representation of his native county, as the advocate of reform. The interest of Lord Downshire had long been supreme in the county. But the young candidate was

<sup>1</sup> Narrative of Rev. William Steel Dickson.

warmly supported by the remnant of the Volunteers, and the growing prosperity of the linen manufacture had tended to reduce the importance of the purely territorial influence. On his canvass he was received with a cordiality which was kindled into enthusiasm by his strong expression of attachment to the liberty of his country, his ardour for reform, and his solemn declarations that, if returned, 'he would use all his exertions to attain it.' The effect produced, as well by his sentiments as by the spirit with which he prosecuted his canvass, was such that it was estimated that, had the freeholders been left to an unbiassed choice, nine tenths of them would have voted in favour of the young Whig patriot. But Castlereagh was attacking in the family stronghold the influence of one of the most powerful peers in Ireland, and it was only after a contest of forty-two days, and at an expense of 60,000*l.*, that, supported by the exertions of the Presbyterian ministers, he won the day.

Castlereagh's intimate correspondence with his brother, the third Marquis of Londonderry, the main authority for the facts of his earlier career, was lost while on his way to India, where Bishop Turner, of Calcutta, had undertaken to write a biography of the statesman, Sir Walter Scott having, for sufficient reasons, declined the task. Consequently little record remains of Castlereagh's career for the years that elapsed between his return to Parliament and his appointment as Minister. But a few letters of importance survive which throw a strong light, not merely upon the development of Castlereagh's opinions, but upon the state of parties and politics in Ireland at the period. Shortly after his entrance upon public life Castlereagh proceeded to the Continent, and in 1791 spent several months in France. In a couple of valuable letters, addressed to the old Lord Camden, he gives us the impressions of a young Whig aristocrat of France under the Constituent Assembly. What he then saw accounts, in all probability, for the changes of opinion which followed in his case, as in that of the much older Burke, from a near view of the Revolution in action, and of the second National Assembly. Writing under date November 11th, 1791, he

describes the character and composition of the Legislative Assembly, and details the results of his observation in travelling from Spa to Paris with an insight remarkable in a man of only two-and-twenty. The drift of his comments may be gathered from the following paragraphs.

From what I have said you will not rank me among the admirers of the French Revolution as the noblest work of human integrity and human wisdom. I really am not. I discover in what they have done much to approve, and much to condemn. I feel as strongly as any man that an essential change was necessary for the happiness and for the dignity of a great people long in a state of degradation. . . . If I could do it without seeming to approve the principles professed by their leaders, principles which I shall ever condemn as tumultuous pedantry, tending directly to unsettle government and ineffectual in its creation, I should on all occasions worship and applaud the feeling which led the way to this unparalleled change.<sup>1</sup>

In the same letter, speaking of Ireland, he observes :—

Your island (Great Britain), thank God, is tranquil, happy, and contented. The situation of ours is more precarious. I am inclined to think it will not remain long as it is. The government of it I do not like, but I prefer it to a revolution. There is great room and necessity for amendment, and our connection would not be weakened by it. The people begin to grow very impatient, the abuses are considerable, and their weight nothing. The Catholics are calling for emancipation. I dread a collision between them and the dissatisfied Protestants. If tumult then should arise, it will be difficult to establish the Government afterwards to their exclusion. I am afraid reform will be postponed until it is too late; and what I particularly lament is, that in Ireland those moderate characters who wish to oppose popular violence, and to employ their weight in repressing tumultuous innovation, have not good grounds to stand on.

Fifteen months later, January 26, 1793, writing to the same correspondent, he notes how the idea of reform had gained strength, and that 'it is supported by those

<sup>1</sup> Sir A. Alison's *Lives of Lord Londonderry and Sir C. Stewart*, vol. i. p. 12.



immediately interested in resisting it, I mean the great borough proprietors,' who were desirous, since reform was inevitable, to effect it themselves, rather than allow it to fall into other hands.

Depend upon it, my dear Lord C., you must change your system with respect to Ireland; there is no alternative, now her independence is admitted, but to govern by reason, or to unite her to Great Britain by force. A government of gross corruption, no longer a government of influence—extinguishing every possibility of Parliamentary authority—will be no longer quietly endured. Even the opinions of those whose daily bread is the corruption complained of, agree that it would require less force to unite the two kingdoms than to govern as heretofore.

I am afraid the question for your decision now is, not what instructions you should send to Mr. Hobart, but what orders to my Lord Howe—provided it is your determination to resist and not guide the storm.

Your policy towards Ireland has been temporising. You have made it necessary for her to seize systematically an ungenerous moment to carry her object. You have attempted to support a system which your first difficulty compels you to abandon. So far have you pushed matters, that as landlords we have no longer any influence in restraining the exertions of our tenantry to effect that which we cannot seriously tell them should be desired.

In almost prophetic language he observes :—

Claims are coming from all ranks, both Catholic and Protestant. The rational principle appears to be to concede what shall conciliate a sufficient number to guard against tumult, and at the same time does not go to destroy the framework of the Constitution. There appears to me this strong distinction between the dissatisfaction of the two sects, that the Protestants may be conciliated at the same time that the Constitution is improved; the Catholics never can by any concession which must not sooner or later tear down the Church or make the State their own. I believe that reform will effect itself either now or in a few years. If that be the case, and the elective franchise is given to that body, a few years will make three fourths of the constituency of Ireland Catholics. Can a Protestant superstructure long continue supported on such a base? With a reformed



representation and a Catholic constituency must not everything shortly follow? Can the Protestant Church remain the establishment of a State of which they do not comprise an eighth part, which will be the case when Catholics are co-equal in political rights? You observe that we paint too strongly the danger of Protestant resentment, and under-rate Catholic anger. Although inferior in numbers, I consider the Protestants infinitely the more formidable body. They have thought longer on political subjects, and are excited to a higher pitch than the Catholics. Besides, I do not think you are likely to appease the latter by any concession you are about to make to them. Nothing short of co-equal rights will satisfy them; and these you cannot yield if you wish to preserve your Church and State. Therefore, though the Catholics may have equal rights, they cannot have equal enjoyments. Depend upon it they will struggle as much for the practical enjoyment as they do now for the theoretical privileges of the Constitution. You have made an unwise alliance with that body. Give them anything rather than the franchise, for it forces everything else. Property will feebly resist a principle so powerful.<sup>1</sup>

For these reasons Castlereagh recommended concession to the Dissenters and resistance to the Catholics, believing that the new-found ardour of the Presbyterians for Catholic Emancipation would soon cool, once their own grievances were conceded. The Government, as we know, decided otherwise; and from that moment Castlereagh, like Clare, considered a Union inevitable.

These views illustrate very vividly the tone and temper of the governing classes in Ireland a century ago. For in dealing with this period of Irish history it is necessary to remember what were the dominating ideals, not merely of the Irish Government, but of the whole Irish House of Commons without distinction of party. In 1798 the Protestantism of the Constitution was as much an article of political faith with all who were concerned in working the machine of government as the predominance of the will of the people as expressed by the majority of the House of Commons is an article of political faith to-day. Grattan,

<sup>1</sup> *Sir A. Alison's Life*, p. 14.

no less than Castlereagh, Charlemont no less than Clare, was pledged to the maintenance of the Constitution in Church and State, and it is mainly to this fact that the revolt from the policy of liberal concession to the Roman Catholics which followed the excesses of the Rebellion must be attributed.

It has been the object of this sketch rather to analyse the state of Irish opinion a hundred years ago, and to examine the influences which contributed to produce the Rebellion, than to epitomise the history of the insurrection. No good purpose can be served by reviving the bloody memories of Scullabogue and Wexford Bridge upon the one hand, or the tortures of the pitch cap and the riding-school upon the other. It is noticeable that the rising itself produced not a single heroic figure. Neither Father Murphy, who led the Wexford rebels to their brief successes, nor Bagenal Harvey, the timid Protestant squire who placed himself for a few weeks at the head of one of the divisions of the rebel army, can be styled a great leader or even a picturesque figure. The rising in Mayo, notable as it was for the successes achieved over the Imperial troops, was less an insurrection than an invasion; and, as Mr. Gribayédoff has pointed out, the military honours of the conflict belong entirely to Humbert and the soldiers of France. The really striking figures on the popular side are the figures of the United Irish leaders, Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the Emmets and the brothers Sheares, men who had as little notion of a Catholic rebellion, in the sense in which the word was understood by Father Murphy, as they had of establishing Mahometanism, to use the language of McNevin, one of the United Irish Executive, in his answers before the Committee of the House of Lords. Those who would commemorate the Rebellion as a movement for the establishment of Ireland as a Roman Catholic country entirely mistake both its origin and its objects, and attribute to the leaders of the movement views and opinions which it is plain that not one among the earlier United Irishmen ever for a moment entertained.

## V

*PLUNKET AND ROMAN CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION*

IN justifying the publication of her excerpts from the correspondence of a long-forgotten Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle, Lady Gregory reports an observation of Mr. Lecky's to which every one interested in Irish history must at once and regretfully subscribe. 'Far less is known,' says the historian, 'of the early part of the nineteenth century in Ireland than of the close of the eighteenth.' The fact is incontestable, though in nowise surprising. The most strenuous of Unionists can hardly avoid the admission that the abolition of her separate legislature deprived Ireland of many of the sources of that picturesque interest which belongs to her story in the closing part of the eighteenth century, an era which must always remain for the historian the grand period of Irish history.

Far different is the period which followed the Legislative Union and preceded Catholic Emancipation. The generation which lived between the sunset of legislative independence and the dawn of that modern Ireland which dates from Catholic Emancipation filled a period among the least attractive of the nineteenth century. It is a period deficient in incident and unfruitful in great personalities. With the passing of the Union Ireland relapsed politically into the dulness and provincialism of the age which had intervened between the days of Swift and those of Grattan. The men who had filled great parts in Dublin were, with a few signal exceptions, lost and unknown in the arena of Westminster; and of the younger generation of the members of the Irish Parliament none achieved fame at St. Stephen's who had not already won it at College Green. In political memoirs

directly relating to Ireland the period is almost barren ; and the affairs of that island are referred to in the letters and papers of the English statesmen of the day only as episodes in which little interest was taken and of which even less was understood. Of the effect of this neglect in producing apathy and dulness in Irish society two illustrations may suffice. It anglicised the career of so essentially Irish a spirit as Thomas Moore's. Too mercurial to be content with a province, Moore transferred to the salon of Holland House and the gardens of Woburn and Bowood the social talents which, had a parliament remained in Dublin, would have been exerted at the table of the Viceroy or in the drawing-rooms of Carton. Again it is difficult to imagine a contrast more complete than that between the pictures drawn by Jonah Barrington and Richard Lalor Sheil of the periods with which they were respectively familiar. Of the two writers, the younger was far the abler and owned the more accomplished pen ; and the inferiority of Sheil's sketches to those of Barrington only emphasises the difference in the scale of interest between the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth. When Barrington wrote his *Recollections* he could call them, grandiosely indeed, but not absurdly, the ' *Historic Memoirs of Ireland.*' When Sheil wished to depict the Dublin of his day he was reduced to the humbler title of ' *Sketches of the Irish Bar.*'

But if this early post-Union period is thus deficient in attraction and charm, it is nevertheless a period of signal importance in the development of Ireland. If the contrast between the old and the new order of things was depressing and sometimes painful to the imagination of Irishmen, it was a period marked in no inconsiderable degree by material progress, and by an improvement in the education and social condition of the people which, if gradual, was still apparent, and without which O'Connell, when the time came for his agitation, might have exercised his magical gifts in vain. Above all, it was the period during which the principle of Catholic Emancipation was struggling for recognition.

The history of Ireland in the nineteenth century falls naturally into two main periods of nearly equal length, but of which the contrasts are so sharply drawn that to modern observation they might seem to be separated by a century ; so opposite are the social characteristics and so different the political ideas which belong to each. The first stretches from the Union to the Young Ireland movement and the Potato Famine, and belongs to history ; the second reaches from that point to the present moment. Of these periods the first may itself be divided into two ; of which one runs from 1800 to 1828, and is occupied with the struggle for religious freedom. The second and shorter begins with the triumph of O'Connell in the latter year, and ends in the social cataclysm of the famine and the political anarchy caused by schism between Old and Young Ireland, from the throes of which have emerged all the movements that are still living in the Ireland of to-day. It is the earliest of these strongly marked and separated periods that falls to be dealt with here.

The Ireland of Swift is hardly more remote from the Ireland of Parnell than is the Ireland of that epoch when the principle of Catholic Emancipation was still struggling for recognition, and when resistance to the demand was avowedly based by statesmen on the inconsistency between the concession of the Roman Catholic claims and the maintenance of the Protestant Constitution in Church and State. In those days Ireland still remained absolutely in the hands of the territorial aristocracy which had held power throughout the eighteenth century. As lately as 1825 the whole parliamentary representation was in the control of the country gentlemen. The Union had altered nothing in this respect. Although Catholic Emancipation was the foremost subject of contention, the cleavage of parties in the country was not as yet synonymous with the antagonism of creeds. In the generation that succeeded the Union, parties followed in the main the lines which had been formed in the parliamentary conflicts of the extinct legislature. The ideals of the elder generation of Protestant landowners



were not yet in sharp conflict with those of the mass of the people. Grattan had found among the Protestant squirearchy, who dreaded emancipation as incompatible with the preservation in Ireland of the Protestant Constitution of 1782, the most efficient allies in his struggle against the destruction of the Parliament he had won; and it took twenty years of steadfast resistance to the Roman Catholic demand to alienate the forty-shilling freeholders (who were abolished by Peel when he carried the measure which their defection had rendered inevitable) from the landowners who had shared their national aspirations. It was not until after the severe famine of 1822 that the people began to range themselves in systematic political opposition to their landlords, and even then their hostility was mainly the resultant of the distress created by the depression of the times, and the consequent heavy pressure of rents which had been raised during those piping times of agriculture which had prevailed during the Napoleonic wars.

For it is remarkable that in these early years the mass of the Catholic voters who had been enfranchised in 1793 were singularly apathetic on the subject of emancipation. The Roman Catholic peers represented by Lord Fingall, and even the Roman Catholic merchants of Dublin represented by John Keogh, were far more concerned for the liberation of their faith than the Roman Catholic peasantry appeared to be at that time; and the agitation both of Lord Fingall and of Keogh—and indeed, it may be added, of the Roman Catholic hierarchy headed by Archbishop Troy—was avowedly loyal to the Constitution. For many years after the Union the remarkable expressions used by McNevin and by Thomas Addis Emmet at their examination before Lord Clare in 1798 remained applicable to the mass of the population. ‘The importance of the subject,’ said McNevin, himself a Catholic, ‘has passed away long since; it really is not worth a moment’s thought at the present period.’ ‘I don’t think it matters a feather what the poor think of it,’ said Emmet. ‘The mass of the people do not care the value of a

drop of ink for Catholic Emancipation.'<sup>1</sup> It is this apathy of the population which explains, though it does not justify, the academic character of the early debates on emancipation in the Imperial Parliament, and the amateur spirit in which the great question was approached even by the statesmen who affected to support it.

A second characteristic which differentiates the Ireland of the first quarter of the nineteenth century from the Ireland of to-day is its remoteness in those days from the centre of the Empire. In days before the locomotive, still more in days when there was no steam communication between Dublin and Holyhead, Ireland was a province in a sense in which it has long ceased to be so regarded. In the first decade of the century Dublin, for every purpose of conference and discussion, was much further from London than Calcutta is to-day. In bad weather the two capitals were often five days apart. As late as 1815 it took Peel, when Chief Secretary, thirty-three hours—two nights and a day—to make the passage from Holyhead to Dublin; and in 1821, just before the visit of George IV. to Ireland, Lord Talbot, the Viceroy, writing from Ingestre to Mr. Gregory, notes with enthusiasm the feat of the new packet, which had enabled him to cross the Channel and to travel seventy-two miles in England and seven in Ireland within the space of thirty hours.

Again at this period the Irish American, as he has been known for half a century, was still unheard of. That large naturalised but unabsorbed population of Irishmen, for whose steady immigration the United States has found room for several decades, had not yet commenced its exodus. At the beginning of the century there was indeed an American-Irish population; but it was a population Saxon, and not Celtic, in its origin, Protestant, and not Catholic, in its sympathies. The Irishmen who participated in the successful assertion of American independence, and whose kindred in Ireland manned the ranks of the Irish Volunteers, were not the progenitors of the American-Irish of to-day.

<sup>1</sup> *Pieces of Irish History*, p. 200.

It was from among the Scottish-Irish of Ulster that the founders of the American Republic drew many of the most valuable among the citizen soldiers of Washington's army, and it was from the same source that the power was drawn to which England felt constrained to yield in 1782, and which, sixteen years later, constituted the backbone of the movement in which the Rebellion of 1798 originated. But the Irish Americans who traced their birth to Ulster had no affinities with Catholic Ireland, and their sympathies with the democratic movement at home were withered in the fires of the Rebellion. From 1798 to 1848 no external influences worth speaking of hostile to Great Britain were exerted from America by men of Irish descent—a fact which the abortive rising of the younger Emmet illustrates rather than contradicts. The failure of that enthusiast either to stimulate insurrection from without or to nurse it from within testifies in the strongest manner to the stagnation which had fallen upon the usually angry waters of political discontent.

But although there was thus an almost total absence of organised agitation, either upon patriotic or upon religious lines, there were throughout this period from time to time evident manifestations of those sporadic agrarian disturbances from which Ireland has seldom been wholly exempt. To the Steel Boys, Hearts of Oak, and Defenders of the eighteenth century there succeeded the Threshers, whose objective was Tithe, and the Ribbonmen, whose conspiracy was perhaps the earliest avowed combination against the payment of rent in Ireland, and whose agitation derived its strongest impulse from the ineradicable land-hunger of the Irish people, and the traditionary doctrine of the ownership of the land by the descendants of its expropriated possessors. But during the pre-Emancipation period neither of these movements attained to really formidable proportions. Ribbonism appears to have originated in the North of Ireland, where it seems to have been the Catholic counterblast to Orangeism, and to have partaken at first mainly of the character of a religious combination, though it soon assumed an agrarian form. The movement was not widespread,

being confined to the Roman Catholic population of Ulster; and that it had not made itself felt as a force sufficient to inspire much serious alarm may be inferred from an anecdote indicative of the depths of official ignorance which Lady Gregory reports. When in 1818 it was reported to the Home Secretary by an informer that 'a great deal of Ribbon work is carrying on at Ballycastle,' Lord Sidmouth forwarded the letter to Ireland, endorsing it as information relative 'to an intended rising of the Ribbon Weavers.'

It was in an Ireland thus tranquil, self-contained, and provincial that the struggle for Emancipation commenced. The first years of the century passed amid the dubious expectancy excited during the negotiations for the Union by the pledges of Cornwallis and Castlereagh. For a time, Grattan and his adherents continued to await the fulfilment of the Irish policy of Pitt. When it had become plain, first through the retirement of Pitt from office, and afterwards through his resumption of it without any conditions in favour of the Roman Catholics, that the boon would not be granted by George III. or the Tories, expectation was centred for a brief moment in Fox and the heir to the throne, who it was considered certain would signalise their accession to the power long denied to them by passing the measure with which both were understood to be identified. When, however, Fox, as Foreign Secretary, under the nominal chieftainship of Grenville, arrived for a brief moment at the helm, he declined to legislate in a direction obnoxious to the feelings of his sovereign. During their short tenure of office the Whigs were reduced to appeals to their Irish friends not to embarrass the Ministry by agitating the question, but to be satisfied with the good intentions of statesmen determined to redeem their pledges at the earliest opportune moment. The friends of Emancipation were, indeed, consistently unfortunate. Fox, like Canning twenty years later, died in the moment of belated triumph, at the head of a divided party. With him died even the faint hopes that rested on the good intentions of the Whigs, and the Tories entered on the most extended period

of power ever enjoyed by any party since the one-man Ministry of Walpole. Under the leadership of Perceval, they offered an absolute and uncompromising resistance to the Catholic claims, and afterwards, under the premiership of Lord Liverpool, they established that extraordinary system under which the controversy which most divided parties in the State was allowed to remain an open question in the Cabinet.

For the long struggle which was maintained under these peculiar conditions in Ireland and in the Imperial Parliament, there was developed a protagonist well suited in temperament and training as well to the grey era which witnessed his efforts as to the forces at his disposal and to the weapons which were available. Between the passion and the pomp of Grattan and the turbulent but conquering vehemence of O'Connell there intervenes in the history of Irish patriotism and eloquence the granite figure of Plunket. The secondary place which is occupied in the chronicles of the agitation that make up the contribution of Ireland to the parliamentary history of the first quarter of the nineteenth century by the man who, through three fourths of its course, occupied the foremost place in the struggle, has never been sufficiently accounted for. The surpassing eminence of Plunket in the parliamentary arena in the days when

Emancipation, not as yet in reach,  
Was still a glorious question for a speech <sup>1</sup>

has been proclaimed not by one, but by all, of his most conspicuous contemporaries. Brougham and Mackintosh, Peel and Russell, have vied in eulogies which concur to raise the fame of the Irish orator to the level of the greatest names in the parliamentary eloquence of the three kingdoms, and render the more extraordinary the comparative failure of the most eloquent champion of the Catholic cause to touch the hearts and imaginations of that people with whose aspirations, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, his fame is for ever associated.

This failure has usually been ascribed to the coldness of

<sup>1</sup> Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's *St. Stephen's*.



Plunket's temperament and to his imperfect sympathy with the people whose cause he represented. Yet the judgment is hardly just, either to an eloquence which in many of its finest manifestations evinced heart as well as intellect, or to a character which, though ordinarily rugged, and at times even arctic in its exterior, had its sunny season of almost torrid warmth. More justly may Plunket's limited popularity be ascribed to the period in which his lot was cast and to the inequality of his opportunities. None of the great reputations of the Irish Parliament were obtained more quickly than Plunket's. It is difficult to believe that a parliamentary success achieved as rapidly as Grattan's would not have been followed by a political career of commensurate importance had the field of his early fame remained open. Plunket is the first and greatest of a series of great Irish lawyers, of whom his contemporary Bushe, and his successor Whiteside, are examples, whose reputation in extra-legal circles has been dwarfed by the extinction of the Irish Parliament. The Forum is a smaller stage than the Senate, and though the Bar affords in some respects a more severe test of the powers of an orator than those which Parliament demands, the magnitude of the issues with which a statesman deals gives to his rhetoric an elevation which is lacking in the less conspicuous and more ephemeral issues with which forensic rhetoric is concerned.

With a legislature in Dublin, a parliamentary career was easily and naturally combined with professional pursuits. With a Parliament in London, such a combination is always maintained with difficulty, and in the days before the locomotive, when, as Mr. Gregory's diary shows, a journey from Dublin to London cost, to a person of position, as much as 45*l.* 10*s.*, it was wellnigh impossible. To Plunket the extinction of the Grattan Parliament meant the suspension of his political career for several years. From 1800 to 1806 he was without a constituency, and though while Attorney-General in the Grenville Administration he occupied for a short period in 1807 a seat in the House of Commons, he

was obliged to resign it on the fall of that Ministry, being unable to afford, without the emoluments of office, the loss of income involved in his severance from the Irish Bar. It was not until an accession of fortune came to him through the death of an elder brother that he was enabled in 1812 to re-enter the Assembly. That a man who, between the thirty-sixth and forty-eighth years of his age, was almost entirely removed from Parliament, should have been able to achieve the fame which Plunket so easily won, is as high a proof of the greatness of his powers as could possibly be asked. For that his eloquence in the House of Commons, even at its highest, suffered in some degree from this great disadvantage, is evident from the remark of a very competent critic on his greatest speech in that Assembly—‘If he had been bred in Parliament I am inclined to think he would have been the greatest speaker that ever appeared in it.’

It may be said, however, that though these considerations sufficiently account for the subordinate place which Plunket occupies in the annals of politics, as distinguished from those of parliamentary eloquence, it does not explain the comparatively low place which he has kept in the affections of the people of his own country. Grattan and O’Connell hold secure thrones in the hearts and imaginations of the majority of Irishmen, while the author of the most majestic assertion of the rights of the Irish Roman Catholics that ever shook the walls of Parliament is almost forgotten. Here, again, the explanation is, largely, the misfortune of his position. Plunket left office with the Grenville Whigs in 1807 because he could not serve in a Ministry which refused to contemplate Catholic Emancipation as a possibility.<sup>1</sup> It was not until 1821, when the remnant of the same party was induced to join the Liverpool Ministry by the promise that Emancipation should be regarded as an open question, that he returned to office. But he was

<sup>1</sup> He was pressed by Sir Arthur Wellesley, the Chief Secretary, to retain the post, being assured that it would be considered a strictly legal office, and free from political obligations. But Lord Grenville, whom Plunket consulted on the occasion, rightly considered that he could not consistently remain in office under the Liverpool Administration as then constituted.

removed to the House of Lords in 1827, on the succession of Canning to the premiership just before the triumph of Emancipation. And no sooner had he found a chief who shared his views in regard to Ireland than the death of Canning, who, if spared, might have carried the long-looked-for reform as the voluntary gift of a powerful Ministry, precipitated the short-lived triumph of Protestant ascendancy which ended in Peel's capitulation to O'Connell.

Thus, though Plunket had been through years of difficulty and discouragement the foremost champion of the Catholic cause, though he had made serious sacrifices to his convictions on the subject, and though in the last debate on the question in the House of Lords he exerted himself powerfully in its behalf, he had the misfortune to occupy for six years the ambiguous position of a supporter of Emancipation in a Ministry which was unable to adopt as part of its policy the measure to which his whole career and highest powers had been devoted. He was thus robbed by the circumstances of his position of the credit of his services, at the same time that his personal popularity was seriously diminished by the conflict in which, as chief law officer of the Crown in Ireland, he was obliged to engage with O'Connell, while attempting to repress the turbulence of the great agitator. Perhaps, too, it may be said that in the days of acute strife and of popular agitation down to which Plunket lived it did the friend and follower of Grattan no service with the majority of his countrymen to receive the eulogies of Brougham and Lord John Russell and the hated Whigs with whom O'Connell strove. But in the clearer air of history such tributes may be accepted at their true worth, even by Irishmen too fervid to share the staid patriotism of Plunket; and more than half a century of concessions, won only after sustained appeals to the Imperial Parliament, should teach his countrymen to appreciate at their true magnitude the services of an orator who could subjugate that Parliament by the power of an eloquence unequalled by any of his contemporaries. Of that power and of the qualities which underlay it, Bulwer Lytton has conveyed

some notion to posterity in one of the most masterly of the many vivid pictures in which his poem 'St. Stephen's' abounds.

If the circumstances of his career have thus tended, in a measure, to dwarf the name and services of Plunket, other and more accidental disadvantages have been no less hurtful to his reputation. Of the great speeches which moved his auditors so profoundly the reports which remain to posterity are curiously incomplete and unsatisfactory. In his preface to the biography by Lord Rathmore, Brougham has described the curious indolence and indifference which made Plunket neglect until too late almost every opportunity of revising his speeches; so that it 'must be a matter of unceasing regret to every admirer of eloquence, and to all who devote themselves to the rhetorical art, whether in the Senate or in the Courts of Justice, that so vast a body of the noblest orations ever delivered in any age should have perished, and that the great man's fame rests upon tradition, and on a small number of speeches, as it were samples to justify the accounts of those who lived in his day.' And of the legitimate material of political biography the remains are deplorably scanty. The two volumes published more than thirty years ago by Lord Rathmore practically exhaust the available documents. Never a ready correspondent, Plunket's letters on public affairs were usually meagre; whilst the papers which had accumulated in his possession through the more generous epistles of his friends are said to have been destroyed by the ex-Chancellor in a moment of chagrin while smarting under the ill-treatment which his old friends had shown him in superseding him on the Irish Woolsack for the benefit of Lord Campbell.

Born at Enniskillen on July 1, 1764, William Conyngham Plunket was the youngest son of the Rev. Patrick Plunket, a Nonconformist clergyman of that town, who subsequently became the minister of the Unitarian congregation of Strand Street, Dublin. Dr. Plunket, who appears to have possessed something of the force of character which distinguished his



son, died at a comparatively early age, leaving his widow and family in circumstances so straitened as to require the public subscription by which the means of education were readily provided for his six children by a grateful congregation. Young Plunket was thus enabled to acquire, first at Dr. Kerr's School, and subsequently at Trinity College, Dublin, a competent knowledge of the classics, and an abundant intellectual equipment. To his abiding sense of the advantage to himself of the kindly benevolence shown by his father's friends Plunket in his last days testified in a striking manner when, on the death, some sixty years later, of a succeeding minister at Strand Street, in circumstances equally trying, he contributed to the fund raised for the relief of the clergyman's family the munificent subscription of 500*l*.

Plunket's college life began at the moment when Grattan had won for the Irish Parliament its short-lived independence, and he soon joined the coterie of brilliant young Irishmen who emulated and imitated in the Historical Society of Trinity College the eloquence which reverberated through the adjacent building in College Green. In this society the future senator took his first lessons in oratory, and there it was that he imbibed the principles of that moderate Liberalism to which he clung steadfastly throughout every phase of his career. Dublin University, which has been too commonly accounted the home of an undiscerning and undeviating Toryism, but which has always been more Liberal than its reputation, was then under the influence of its somewhat incongruous Provost, Hely Hutchinson ; and in days before Burke had sounded the note of alarm which cleft the Whig party in twain the Historical Society was the home of a distinctly militant Liberalism. At the period when Plunket first bethought himself of politics, men whom the stress of a revolutionary era was to place so far asunder as Charles Kendal Bushe and Wolfe Tone, Laurence Parsons, afterwards Lord Rosse, and the elder Emmet were joined in a cordial union of political conviction which lasted for many years ere it perished in the flames of revolutionary



agitation. But the tone and colour of Plunket's creed may be said never to have varied from the outset to the close of his career. He was a Whig by temperament, and a Whig he remained through every alternation of political fortune, never advancing beyond the limits of a cautious Liberalism combined with a fearless imperialism. In later life he was the subject of some animadversion from the more stern and unbending disciples of Fox for throwing in his lot with the Grenville Whigs. But those who thus attacked him can have had little real understanding of his political sympathies, for Plunket was a Grenville Whig before the Grenville Whigs existed, and remained one after they had become extinct.

Called to the Irish Bar in 1787, which he joined under the patronage of the jovial and popular Chief Baron Yelverton, Plunket applied himself strenuously to his profession, maintaining, however, a keen interest in public affairs. By virtue of his knowledge of politics and his university connections, he made his first important appearance as counsel for Sir Laurence Parsons in a celebrated election petition against the return of Mr. Hely Hutchinson for the University, which, it was alleged, had been procured through the illicit intervention of the Provost. The development of Irish politics was gradually separating Plunket at this time from his early associates, and throwing him more and more into sympathy with Grattan, whose devoted adherent he remained to the close of the veteran patriot's career, and to whom in the greatest of all his speeches he paid the homage of a splendid panegyric. But a letter written to Wolfe Tone in 1795, on the occasion of the departure of the United Irish leader for America, shows that even in their altered circumstances he still preserved a cordial friendship for his old companion; while on his side Tone dwells more than once in his diaries on his affectionate memories of their intercourse in their early years at the Bar, when they were members of the same circuit.

It was not, however, until 1798, when he had been above ten years at the Bar, and had already obtained his silk gown

from Lord Chancellor Clare, that Plunket entered the Irish Parliament. In that year Lord Charlemont, the Nestor of the Irish Whigs, and the early patron and friend of Grattan, was desirous of finding some young politician of ability and promise to sit for the family borough from which his own title was derived. Two-and-twenty years earlier the same patron, by means of the same borough, had given to the author of legislative independence his first Parliamentary opportunity; and he was now to afford to the friend and champion of Emancipation the means of rendering the first of a long series of services to that cause. Charlemont had long been the formal and ornamental head of the popular party in Ireland. He had been the Commander-in-Chief of the Volunteers, and had presided at the famous Convention of 1783. But he was a Protestant of the Protestants, and a firm foe to Constitutional innovation. His influence had been successfully exerted at the Volunteer Convention to prevent the endorsement of the Catholic claims by that body; and he preserved tenaciously in his declining days the principles and prejudices which had animated his prime. Accordingly his invitation to Plunket to accept the nomination to the seat for Charlemont was offered upon the basis of opposition to the obnoxious doctrine of Emancipation. At the interview between the old peer and the young politician at which this offer was made, the divergence of their views upon this point became apparent; and it is much to the credit of one who has been too often charged with the selfish opportunism of the political lawyer, that Plunket at once decided to forego an opportunity so advantageous to his career at the price of his convictions on what seemed to him the most vital of Irish questions. His independence did him no disservice in the eyes of the old patriot, who invited Plunket to a second conference, at which he promised his nominee a free hand on the Catholic question. Plunket accordingly entered the House of Commons as member for the borough of Charlemont. It was thus his good fortune to mark his entrance upon the stage of active politics by a signal service to the cause with which to the day of its final

triumph Plunket was thenceforward identified. The conversion of the old Protestant stalwart was complete, and in a conversation with his *protégé* shortly before his death on the subjects of Parliamentary reform and the Catholic claims Charlemont frankly admitted his change of view, observing epigrammatically that to these two questions he had made two sacrifices, 'to the former a borough, and to the latter a prejudice.'

The political circumstances of 1798 were not especially favourable to the parliamentary success of the member for Charlemont. The outbreak of the Rebellion, justifying all the forebodings of the dominant party in the Irish assembly, condemned their opponents to inaction, and afforded no opportunity of distinction to a parliamentary novice. Plunket earned no special reputation in his first session; and although his patron wrote of him, within two months of his entering the House of Commons, that he had exceeded his (Charlemont's) expectations, and was 'already one of the best and most useful debaters,' Mr. Plunket was described in a book of 'Sketches of Irish Political Characters,' published in 1799, and written in a tone of friendliness to the popular party, as 'an acute reasoner, but not an eloquent speaker,' and it appears that, at this period at least, his voice was not powerful.<sup>1</sup>

Of Plunket's attitude towards public affairs at this period a particularly interesting record survives in a hitherto unpublished letter, written in October 1798 to a friend in America, in which he reviews the incidents of that exciting year, and discusses with remarkable insight the conduct of the Government in relation to the outbreak and suppression of the Rebellion. He was of opinion that at the moment of the outbreak of the Rebellion the Government was totally unable to cope with the insurgents, and considered that if

<sup>1</sup> The following account of the impression created by one of Plunket's earliest speeches against the Union survives among the Pelham Correspondence at the British Museum in a letter dated January 24, 1799, addressed to the ex-Chief Secretary by Mr. R. Griffith: 'George Ponsonby made a great display of ability, but was outshone by Plunket, who, notwithstanding his very weak voice, made a very powerful impression, and, I may say, decided the question.'

the French who subsequently arrived under Humbert had landed during the Rebellion the country would have been subdued.<sup>1</sup>

As we are at present concerned mainly with the post-Union period of Plunket's political activity, we shall refer but briefly to the part he played in the debates upon the Union. Though the invective of some of his speeches, and particularly of his attacks upon Castlereagh, whom he derided in the greatest of his post-Union speeches as 'an insufficient boy,' rises to an extraordinary pitch of passionate vehemence, Plunket scarcely attained to the high-water mark of his powers in the Irish Parliament. In his Union speeches his oratory has the rush, the haste, and the movement of a swollen river torrent; in his Emancipation speeches there is more of power and majesty, and he resembles, as was said of a great Irishman of an earlier generation, 'a great sea in a calm.' The admirable courage which Plunket exhibited at a period when opposition had been rendered almost powerless by the withdrawal of Grattan and his immediate associates from the debates at College Green unquestionably proved his possession of the essential quality of fearless self-reliance. But the rhetoric of these speeches is, on the whole, overstrained. If his castigation of Castlereagh recalls in its unsparing denunciation the pitiless ferocity of Junius, it recalls also its exaggeration. The indignation seems at times artificial, and personalities too frequently usurp the place of argument. That Plunket was himself conscious of the unfairness of many of his diatribes is manifest from the terms in which he alludes, in a letter written to Lord Londonderry shortly after Castlereagh's death, to the circumstances under which he had accepted the Attorney-Generalship in the administration of which his quondam enemy was the most eminent member:—

His (Castlereagh's) friendship and confidence were the prime causes which induced his Majesty's Government to desire my services; and I can truly add that my unreserved reliance on the cordiality of his feelings towards me, joined

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for this letter.

to my perfect knowledge of the wisdom and liberality of all his public objects and opinions, were the principal causes which induced me to accept the honour which was proposed to me.

But although Plunket was occasionally hurried, in the height of the stormy controversies of the Union, into violences of expression and even action which were foreign to the natural calm of his nature, and although his view of the policy of the Union underwent considerable modification as he observed the gradual course of its effects, there is no doubt whatever that at this period he was sincerely convinced of the magnitude and reality of the evils he seemed to foresee, and at which he declaimed with so much magnificent wrath. In the letter of 1798 from which we have already quoted he communicated to his correspondent in America his apprehension of a Union, writing of it as a measure which if determined on by ministers would most probably be adopted by the Irish Parliament owing to the disgust of moderate men with the excesses of the popular side. But he added that though 'it would for the present be submitted to, it seems to me equally clear that in the course of not many years it would be followed by a separation—an event ruinous both to Great Britain and Ireland.'

With the passing of the Act of Union, Plunket quietly turned from politics to the Bar. He made no attempt for several years to enter the Imperial Parliament. But the fame he had won at College Green attended him to the Four Courts, and helped to ensure his forensic success. In 1803 his acceptance of a brief for the prosecution on the occasion of the trial of Robert Emmet for high treason caused the first rift in his relations with the popular party. To Plunket was assigned the duty of replying for the Crown and reviewing the evidence. This he did with a vigour and directness which drew down upon him the wrath of Emmet's friends. Plunket was incorrectly represented as having been the intimate of the unfortunate patriot, and as having, in the ardour of the Crown advocate, forgotten the respect due to the memories of private friendship. These



charges were proved to be false, and when, on his appointment as Solicitor-General a few months later, Cobbett made them the basis of a bitter personal attack, Plunket obtained 500*l.* damages in respect of the libel from a London jury. It is obvious that the inconsistency which was sought to be established between Plunket's fiery opposition to the Union and his denunciation of the treason which sought to overturn it by force was purely superficial. Whether as the opponent or the apologist of the Union, Plunket was always a convinced Imperialist, and, like Grattan, was loyal to the core to the British connection and abhorrent of every form of unconstitutional agitation. But, however unjust the charge, the incident undoubtedly injured his popularity.

Plunket's acceptance of the Solicitor-Generalship in the Addington Administration was followed by his promotion to Attorney-General in 1805; and, retaining his position in the 'Ministry of all the Talents,' he entered the House of Commons in 1807 at the solicitation of Grenville as the member for Midhurst, a borough for which Fox had once sat. From the representation of this seat he retired, as already mentioned, on his resignation of the Attorney-Generalship at the fall of the Grenville combination, and did not appear again at Westminster until 1812. But he signalised his first brief appearance in the Imperial Parliament by a speech on the Catholic question which charmed and delighted the House of Commons, and which was referred to a year later by so high an authority as Mr. Whitbread as 'a speech which will never be forgotten.' Returning to Ireland, he assumed in the lesser world of the Four Courts a position of eminence more commanding, perhaps, than has ever been occupied by any private member of the Irish Bar. In 1812 he was returned to Parliament as member for the University of Dublin, and was thus enabled to participate in the debate raised by Grattan on the Catholic question in 1813. It was then that he delivered the speech upon which, together with the still more magnificent effort of 1821, his parliamentary fame chiefly rests.

At this period the Catholic cause had made what appeared

to be substantial strides towards success. As early as 1807 George Ponsonby had written to Plunket that the 'No Popery' cry was dead, and that 'if the King were out of the question the Catholic Bill would pass like a turnpike one.' For some years the only questions left open for discussion between parties at Westminster appeared to be merely the form which the Relief Bill should take and the securities by which it should be accompanied for the protection of the Establishment. Croker in his statesmanlike pamphlet on the State of Ireland, written in 1808, laid down, in suggestions which are valuable as depicting the ideas of the moderate Protestants for whom the writer spoke, the conditions upon which Emancipation might be safely granted. Of these the most important was 'that the priesthood be Catholic but not Popish, paid by the State, approved by the Crown, and independent of all foreign control;' in other words, endowment of the priesthood and a royal veto on the appointment of bishops. That both these proposals might have been readily carried on these lines at any period from 1807 to 1821, but for the obstacle stated by Ponsonby, appears practically certain; and there is no reason to doubt that such a settlement would have been accepted by every section of Catholic opinion in Ireland, including the bishops, and by all but an insignificant remnant of Protestant extremists. The Catholic organisation was at this time less militant than it had been since 1791 or than it became a few years later. Wyse, the historian of the Catholic Association, admits that the agitation had been weakened by contention for leadership, and rendered less effective by 'the apprehension of incurring by any acts of a bold and independent nature the displeasure of the superior powers.' The hierarchy were still led by Archbishop Troy, a prelate of great moderation and discretion, who had conducted the negotiations with Castlereagh which preceded the Union, and who, loyal to the English connection from beginning to end of his episcopate, had always shown himself favourable to a reasonable compromise. But then, as in 1800, the impossibility of gaining the concurrence of the King obliged

even the ministers who favoured Emancipation to postpone all thought of legislation; and before the scruples of the Sovereign could be overcome, Catholic opinion under the influence of O'Connell had so hardened against what were known as 'the securities' as to render any measure of limited Emancipation useless and impossible.

The state of parties in Ireland at this period is somewhat involved and confusing. But the ideas of the Whig aristocracy with whom Plunket most nearly sympathised, though he went beyond them in his views on Emancipation, as well as those of the constitutional Catholics, of the official Tories, and of the irreconcilable Orangemen, may best be explained by a reference to the four conspicuous figures in whom those ideas were respectively personified—viz. George Ponsonby, John Keogh, William Saurin, and Patrick Duigenan.

Grattan apart, the chief figure among Irish Liberals in the House of Commons was that of George Ponsonby. A member of one of the most influential and wealthy of the propertied families of Ireland, he had, while still a very young man, co-operated with Grattan in 1782, and had throughout the career of the Irish Parliament acted uniformly with the old patriot. He had been the trusted adviser of the Rockingham Whigs in their dealings with Ireland, and when in 1794 the Duke of Portland and his friends coalesced with Pitt, Ponsonby was the person chiefly consulted by them in framing the Irish policy which was then thrust on the Prime Minister. At the time of this combination he had expected that the appointment of Attorney-General would be given to himself, and that a large share of Irish patronage would be placed at the disposal of his friends, who had long been excluded from office. He exercised a boundless influence over Lord Fitzwilliam, with whom he was closely connected by family ties. And to his determination 'to get,' in his own words, 'the whole power of the country into his hands,' Lord Ashbourne, in his book on Pitt, has properly ascribed the chief responsibility for the errors of that well-intentioned but most ill-

advised Viceroy. After the Union Ponsonby became prominent in the Imperial Parliament, of which, save during his brief tenure of office as Lord Chancellor of Ireland in the Grenville Ministry, he remained a member until his death in 1817. During the latter half of this period he was the actual leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, thus taking his place with Castlereagh and Plunket—one can hardly include Grattan—in the small group of Irishmen who had sat at College Green whose parliamentary fame was enlarged by the Union. Ponsonby, however, from the outset of his career at Westminster, was too closely connected with the official Opposition to be able to lend much material assistance to the agitation of the Catholic question; and though he was active in the debate on the Catholic Petition of 1805, and subsequently took a strenuous part in advocating the Veto, the real conduct of the Catholic cause in Parliament fell more and more into the hands of Grattan. The veteran patriot, however, though still great on great occasions, was in delicate health. He had never been eminent as a tactician. He was thus but ill fitted in his declining years for the conduct of an uphill struggle in a hostile assembly on behalf of an unpopular cause.

While the Catholic cause had fallen into aristocratic hands, to an extent which made it possible to describe it with little exaggeration, as Croker did in his pamphlet, as meaning no more than the emancipation of 'at most six lords, one hundred and fifty commoners, and twenty ecclesiastics,' the popular voice was still heard in the councils of the movement in the person of John Keogh, who, supported by the remnant of the old Catholic Committee, was able occasionally to force upon Lord Fingall and his friends measures of which they disapproved. Though now an elderly man, whose work lay in a past which had been distinguished by very solid services to his religion, Keogh's record and performances still entitled him to the acknowledged leadership of the remnant of that body of Roman Catholics by whose exertions in the 'Back-lane Parliament' of 1792 the concession of the parliamentary



franchise had been secured. Humble in his origin, bred to trade, rough in exterior, and unconciliatory in temperament, Keogh may be styled the first plebeian leader of the Irish Catholics. He had been closely connected with the United Irish movement, in which he was for a time the intimate associate and adviser of Tone; but having been arrested, perhaps fortunately for himself, as early as 1796, he escaped complicity with the actual committee of the organisation, and thus avoided the fate which in 1798 overtook the majority of his associates. He had subsequently made his peace with the Government, who, satisfied of his disposition, left him unmolested in his residence at Mount Jerome, near Dublin, where a few years earlier he had undoubtedly plotted with Tone and his associates the means of procuring a French invasion. During the Emmet insurrection his papers were seized by the Government, but were returned to him unopened, an indulgence upon which Keogh's posthumous detractors have founded the suspicion of bad faith. For this charge there appears to have been no sufficient justification, though it is certain that Keogh, whose interest in revolutionary politics seems to have been inspired solely by solicitude for the Catholic cause, loyally accepted the Union and never sought to disturb it. Such an attitude was not unnatural in a man who had realised a large fortune by successful industry, and had acquired substantial real estate in Ireland.

In 1807, in addressing a meeting of the Catholics of Dublin to advocate the adoption of a more vigorous agitation, he stated their object in seeking Emancipation to be 'to attach the (Catholic) population by interest and affection to the Throne and the Empire; and we are bold to say that that single measure will render the Empire invincible.' But these views were not acceptable to the more militant patriots who began to come to the surface in Irish politics during the second decade of the century; and at the close of his life Keogh was rudely dethroned by O'Connell, and his policy repudiated. Yet his boast to his supplanter, 'Twas I made men of the Catholics,' was no exaggeration of



the part he had played in Irish politics; and it is not a little curious that, though so carefully constitutional in his actions, he predicted the means by which Emancipation was eventually to be won—asserting that the return of a Roman Catholic to Parliament would appeal to a principle of liberty more rooted in the minds of Englishmen than their antipathy to Emancipation; and that, rather than disfranchise a constituency by refusing admission to its chosen representative, Parliament would remodel the qualifying oath in favour of Roman Catholics.

The personage by whom Plunket was succeeded in 1807 in the office of Attorney-General, and who retained that appointment for the space—unparalleled in the nineteenth century and but once exceeded in the eighteenth—of fifteen years, was among the most remarkable Irishmen of his day. Of Huguenot descent on the father's side, a Scotch Presbyterian through the mother's, William Saurin united in a person which presented an odd mixture of Languedoc and Fife the cognate religious strains of an uncompromising Protestantism and an ineradicable distrust of Roman Catholicism. Already an eminent king's counsel at the outbreak of the Rebellion in 1798, he had headed the lawyers' corps of Yeomanry, to whose energy and vigilance on that occasion Government was in no small degree indebted for the preservation of order in Dublin; and, entering the Irish House of Commons in the following year, he had led the resistance of the Irish Bar to the Union, bitterly opposing, on strictly Protestant grounds, a measure which threatened, in his opinion, a breach in the Protestant fabric of the Irish constitution. Saurin was reputed to have refused the most attractive offers from Government to induce him to change his opinion, and undoubtedly declined to accept the Solicitor-Generalship when that office fell vacant in 1800. He allowed a similar opportunity to slip in 1803, apparently from a want of confidence in the sincerity of the resistance likely to be offered to Emancipation by the Addington Ministry. When in 1807 the Duke of Portland formed an administration on a frankly anti-Catholic basis, Saurin's

consistent attachment to what were known as Protestant principles, combined with the highest personal character and the foremost professional status, marked him out as the most suitable adviser of the Crown on legal affairs. On Plunket's resignation he was accordingly promoted *per saltum*, mainly at the instance of Sir Arthur Wellesley, over the head of Bushe, who had been Solicitor-General for two years, but who was too closely identified with the Catholic cause to be acceptable to the new régime. Associated with a Lord Chancellor who was a stranger to Ireland, and with a subordinate who lacked the full confidence of his superiors, Saurin quickly became the sole reliance of the Irish Government in legal matters; while the chance which gave him, in the first two years of office, an absentee Chief Secretary in the person of Sir Arthur Wellesley, enabled him to grasp a share of political authority which, once seized, was never voluntarily surrendered. He became the embodiment of the policy of Dublin Castle, and, until he was peremptorily removed from office in 1822, he practically directed the machine of Irish government. So great was his power that he was described by Lord Wellesley, the Lord-Lieutenant who superseded him, as having been the virtual Viceroy for fifteen years.

Saurin was not a great speaker, and he steadily resisted the pressure brought to bear upon him to enter the Imperial Parliament, but he was always at the elbow of successive Chief Secretaries, and as he was also socially well connected, having married a sister of the last Marquis of Thomond, he wielded not merely exceptional official authority, but an extraordinary influence upon the policy of his nominal superiors. How frankly Protestant were Saurin's views may be gathered from a short extract from a letter to Peel in 1813, which may be said to epitomise the whole case of the Protestant opposition to the Catholic claims:—

In Ireland the wit of man cannot devise any security for Protestant establishment but a Protestant government. Nor could the wit of man furnish an argument by which the existence of an exclusive Protestant Church establishment could be defended in a country in which the population

was more than two to one Catholic, if the government of that country was Catholic also, or as much Catholic as Protestant. . . . We ought not to deceive ourselves. Ireland must be either a Catholic or a Protestant State—let us choose. But he is a Utopian who believes he has discovered a nostrum by which it can be both, or neither. This is the project of Grattan and Plunket, who have with great talent and ingenuity first deceived themselves (at which no two men are more expert), and next misled many others.<sup>1</sup>

Of the humblest origin, and originally of the Roman Catholic religion, Patrick Duigenan came to be regarded, by a singular contradiction of fate, as the chief exponent of Irish Protestant opinion in its most confident and uncompromising form. Designed by his parents, who were Leitrim peasants, for the Catholic priesthood, he early exhibited such proofs of that robust vigour of character which distinguished him through life as attracted the notice of a Protestant clergyman who kept a school in his parish. He was henceforward brought up in the Protestant faith, thus affording one of the rare examples of the successful operation of the policy by which the clergy of the Establishment in the middle of the eighteenth century were encouraged to bring over the children of Roman Catholics to the State Church. Profiting by the educational advantages thus opened to him, Duigenan entered at Trinity College, Dublin, where his ability and industry gained for him the distinction of a fellowship. He was subsequently called to the Irish Bar, where his vigorous and somewhat noisy self-assertion soon pushed him into prominence. Attaching himself to the fortunes of Tisdal, the Attorney-General of the day and member for the University, Duigenan had the misfortune to earn the hostility of Tisdal's personal enemy, Provost Hely Hutchinson. As a consequence he lost his Fellowship. But the sacrifice was more than compensated by the patronage with which his devotion to the Attorney-General was rewarded, and by his appointment as Professor of Civil Law in the University;

<sup>1</sup> Sir R. Peel's *Correspondence*, ed. Parker, vol. i. p. 83.

and Duigenan took an ample and enduring revenge upon the Provost by publishing a volume called '*Lachrymæ Academicæ*,' in which Hutchinson's astonishing unfitness for his position as head of the University was made the subject of a ferocious satire.

On the death of his patron Tisdal, Duigenan made himself instrumental in securing the return of Fitzgibbon for the University, and was thenceforward known as the sturdy and trusty henchman of Lord Clare, who rewarded his devotion by successive appointments to the important offices of King's Advocate and Judge of the Prerogative Court. In the Irish Parliament, where he sat for many years, he was distinguished by the violence of his language, and both in speeches and pamphlets constantly attacked Grattan and his associates. At the Union, his position as a Judge of the Probate Court having brought him into close relations with the ecclesiastical authorities, Duigenan was returned, through the influence of the Primate, as member for the borough of Armagh. Thenceforward, until his death in 1816, he was a constant and prominent figure in the debates on the Catholic question, standing sentinel like an angry watchdog at the gates of the Establishment, and presenting the ultra-Protestant view with a coarse and plain-spoken vigour which left no room for doubt as to either the strength or the sincerity of his sentiments. Remarkable for his quaint appearance—he was invariably attired in a rusty bobwig and wore rough Connemara stockings—he earned in the House of Commons the sort of popularity which is commonly produced in that assembly by the piquant contrast between intolerant violence of language and a native kindliness of nature, which, in Duigenan's case, the most malignant outbreaks of fanaticism were powerless to conceal. He won the regard of Wellington, who, while Chief Secretary, placed him in the Irish Privy Council, and the importance of his position, and of the political element which he represented, may be gathered from a letter from Peel to Saurin in 1812, which, though it indicates that the worthy doctor occasionally brought some ridicule upon the



cause he had at heart, shows that Duigenan's lack of discretion had not obliterated in the mind of his chief the recollection of his zealous services.<sup>1</sup>

The old Orangeman did not retire, but remained in Parliament till his death, which took place in his eighty-eighth year, and which occurred appropriately while 'in the act of eating an orange.' The curious contrast between the violence of his precept and the tolerance of his practice is shown by the fact that Duigenan's first wife was a Roman Catholic whose religious principles he respected even to the extent of maintaining a Roman Catholic chaplain in his house; and he concluded one of his most fiery philippics by declaring, in words which bear the stamp of sincerity, that 'in thus publicly declaring my opinion I do some violence to my private feelings and affections, as I live in the strictest intimacy and friendship with several Roman Catholics, for whom I have the sincerest regard and esteem, knowing them to be persons of the greatest worth, integrity, and honour.'

It was on behalf of an Ireland in which such men as these were the representative spokesmen of opposing interests that the Irish Liberals, under the leadership of Grattan and Plunket, renewed at Westminster the struggle which had been suspended at the Union. But, although the latter was unremitting in his parliamentary exertions, his eminence was at first overshadowed by Grattan's stately and venerable figure. It was not until 1821 that Plunket attained to the zenith of his fame, alike in eloquence and in statesmanship. In the preceding year he had taken from the dying hands of Grattan the formal leadership of the Catholic cause, and he lost no time in proving that that cause, though no longer 'enforced by all the resistless

<sup>1</sup> 'I must own,' says Peel, 'that I could never bring myself to propose to Dr. Duigenan to resign his seat in Parliament after all his labours and all his persecutions for righteousness sake, and all the obloquy he has braved and will brave in the cause of Protestant ascendancy. I think he should consult his own inclinations exclusively in retiring from the field, and I would really wish that he might feel an impression that the Government were sensible, I had almost said of his services, and that they would lend him a hand in buckling on his cumbrous armour for another encounter.'—Sir R. Peel's *Correspondence*, vol. iii.



powers which waited on the majesty of Grattan's genius,' had lost nothing in parliamentary weight by the change. Early in 1821 he presented to the House of Commons the petition of the Catholic body, and, in the most famous of all his speeches, moved and carried by a majority of six a resolution in favour of immediate relief. The resolution was followed by a Bill, which was introduced by Plunket, and which, accompanied by a companion measure embodying the 'securities' which were deemed necessary to the safety of the Establishment, passed through the House of Commons by a majority of nineteen. So signal a triumph had not been anticipated even by the friends of the measure, and Plunket enjoyed for a brief moment a popularity with the masses in Ireland which, despite his long devotion to the interests of the Catholics, he had never before attained.

Though the 'securities' or restrictions upon the appointment of Roman Catholic bishops were by no means universally accepted in Ireland, and were indeed denounced by O'Connell at Limerick in language of manufactured violence 'as more penal and persecuting than any of all the statutes passed in the darkest and most bigoted periods of Queen Anne and of the first two Georges,' the general gratification at the adoption of the principle of Emancipation by the House of Commons completely silenced the dissentients. Sheil, who differed all along from O'Connell on the Veto, congratulated the Catholics of Dublin on having reached the day of the political regeneration of Ireland. 'You have not yet entered the Constitution, but,' he proclaimed, 'its gates have been thrown open amidst the acclamation of the Empire, and they stand expanded before you.' In language scarcely less glowing he reminded his countrymen of the debt they owed to those who 'with the thunder of their eloquence have burst the ponderous bars asunder, . . . till at last they have disclosed the great temple to the reception of a long excluded people.' Of Plunket's personal services Sheil made signal acknowledgment in the same speech, describing him as having 'borne away the suffrages of the Empire,' and as having 'by a

single bound of his vigorous mind reached a point of glory to which others, by the toil of years and with great talents, have not been able to attain.' High as was this eulogy, it was not exaggerated, and its justice is attested by the most competent and most impartial auditors of Plunket's greatest effort. In Peel's opinion the speech 'stood at the highest in point of ability of any ever heard in the House, combining the rarest powers of eloquence with the strongest powers of reasoning;' and Mackintosh averred that it proved its author to be 'the greatest master of eloquence and reasoning then existing in public life.'

Plunket was, of course, unable to follow the fortunes of the Bill in the Upper House, and in that assembly no kindred orator appeared to overwhelm prejudice by eloquence, or disarm doubts by victorious argument. Opposed by the Premier and the Chancellor, his Bill was rejected by a majority of thirty-nine, and O'Connell with his irreconcilables exulted at the failure of a compromise which they had detested because they feared it. But within a few months of this check the ever-varying kaleidoscope of Irish politics shifted to a new and wholly unexpected combination. George IV. paid his celebrated visit to his Irish dominions, and the unexampled spectacle was witnessed of a united Ireland in which even the truculence of the great agitator was soothed to the language of compliment under the tactful insincerity of the first gentleman in Europe. The King arrived in August. A millennium, which lasted a fortnight, succeeded his visit, and was followed by a winter of outrage and disturbance which exceeded anything that had been witnessed since the Rebellion. The Cabinet of Lord Liverpool, unable to cope with the disturbance, and aware of their parliamentary weakness, but not yet reconciled to the inevitable, resolved to stave off Emancipation a little longer. They effected a junction with Lord Grenville and his friends; and the Marquis of Wellesley was sent to Ireland with instructions to resist a change of measures and to effect a change of men. In these circumstances it was a matter of extreme

importance to the remodelled Ministry to strengthen itself by including in the Irish Government the most representative Irishman to be found in Parliament. The appointment to high office of the foremost parliamentary advocate of Emancipation was expected to secure the confidence of Roman Catholic Ireland ; while hostages for the passive acquiescence of the Orangemen in a more liberal administration were found in the persons of the Tories Goulburn and Joy, who respectively filled the places of Chief Secretary and Solicitor-General.

It seemed certain that, as the confidential adviser of the new Lord-Lieutenant, the Attorney-General would now become the virtual governor of Ireland. But it cannot be said that in this new situation Plunket rose to the level of his opportunities, and though it is possible that the internal difficulties at Dublin Castle were quite as great as the external advantages appeared to be, the Viceroyalty of Lord Wellesley ranks as the most disappointing of the nineteenth century. Though an Irish peer, and possessed of a considerable Irish estate, Wellesley knew little of Ireland, and, apparently, still less of Irishmen. Sir Walter Scott, who was in Ireland during his Viceroyalty, and was the guest of the Attorney-General at Plunket's residence at Old Connaught, hit off the characteristics of his statesmanship in a sentence : 'The marquis's talk gave me the notion of the kind of statesmanship that one might have expected in a Roman emperor, accustomed to keep the whole world in his view, and to divide his hours between ministers like Mæcenas and wits like Horace.' Accustomed to the exertion of a despotic authority, he was totally unfitted for a community which demanded the most delicate treatment. 'Graceful as Canning, and perhaps as vain,' his self-confidence would not allow him to purchase ease by such a surrender of his opinion to the counsels of his chief adviser as, during the long predominance of Saurin, had enabled such mediocrities as his predecessors, Richmond, Whitworth, and Talbot, to discharge their duties with sufficient credit and a minimum of unpopularity. Wellesley contrived to

offend the aristocracy by the exaggerated pomposity of his demeanour, and the Protestants generally by forbidding, at O'Connell's dictation, the decorations of the statue of King William III. in College Green. Some exasperated Orangeman threw a bottle at his Excellency's head during a visit to the theatre, and a prosecution, initiated by Plunket on *ex-officio* informations, after a grand jury had thrown out the ordinary indictments, ended abortively in a disagreement.

Thenceforward both the Viceroy and his advisers were enveloped in a cloud of unpopularity which emanated equally from both the religious factions. O'Connell, finding that nothing was to be done towards Emancipation, became more than ever active in agitation, and violent of speech; and Plunket, having, perhaps somewhat prematurely, ordered a prosecution for sedition, had the mortification to find his bills of indictment once more ignored by a grand jury, who, much as they hated O'Connell, hated the Wellesley régime still more. Thenceforward the great orator's popularity was entirely at an end. He had offended both parties mortally, the Catholics not less than their opponents. Sheil's encomiums were changed to lamentation and rebuke, and O'Connell was converted from an unruly ally to an implacable foe of the Administration. From that hour the influence of the great agitator was paramount in Ireland. The splendid services rendered by Plunket to the Catholic cause were speedily forgotten in the odium incurred in the contest he was thenceforward obliged to wage with the Catholic Association and its chief; and all hopes of an Emancipation Bill on the lines of Plunket's were at an end.

On the accession of Canning to power in 1827 Plunket was at length removed from this atmosphere of unpleasant contention, and was raised to the peerage, though the hostility of George IV. delayed until 1831 the great prize of the Irish Chancellorship. But with the concluding period of Plunket's career we are not concerned here. The possession of the seals added dignity to his already acknowledged

eminence, but it did not add to his reputation. Great as he had been as an advocate, he had never been a really profound lawyer, and his long judicial record did little to enlarge his fame.

It is by the large part he played in the long struggle for Catholic Emancipation that Plunket as a man of affairs must be judged. The glory of his eloquence detracted has never dimmed and rancour could never injure. By their combination of the most glowing rhetoric with the most cogent reasoning powers, his speeches must always rank as among the highest expressions of human thought. In point of pure intellect he was perhaps the foremost Irishman of the nineteenth century. Yet in the history of his country Plunket's figure stands for a stately presence, rather than a commanding force. His deficiency in those attendant qualities which make men great in action, and which win enthusiasm as well as admiration, has undoubtedly lowered his fame in the eyes of posterity, while the apparent coldness of his temperament and the austerity of his manner deprived him of those hosts of warm friends whose praises have often served to inflate reputations based on a genius far less splendid than Plunket's. He was also of a somewhat fretful disposition, and though Croker's remark that 'when Plunket is sulky no one is so sulky,' presents an exaggerated aspect of this trait, some letters in Lord Rathmore's biography indicate an unnecessary susceptibility in regard to the criticism of his colleagues upon his political conduct. His speeches are curiously deficient in humour, but in this quality, as his letters and many anecdotes record, he was not deficient, though his jests had usually a somewhat saturnine flavour. Plunket also did himself some disservice by a curious lack of energy in ordinary affairs which stands in odd contrast to the strength of conviction which, according to Bulwer Lytton, was the secret of his impressiveness as an orator :

Man has no majesty like earnestness.

But these defects and drawbacks should not be suffered to degrade Plunket from his true place in the history of his



country. As the inner course of politics becomes more and more fully revealed in the memoirs and state papers of his age, the impression he created and the influence he exerted on his contemporaries are becoming more and more fully understood. And though the pen of the historian of the nineteenth century in Ireland must often be devoted to more picturesque and more popular personalities, it can be occupied with none that have exerted a more splendid genius or a more sincere patriotism in behalf of the essential liberties of their countrymen.

## APPENDIX

LETTER WRITTEN BY PLUNKET TO A FRIEND IN AMERICA,  
DESCRIBING THE STATE OF IRELAND IN THE AUTUMN  
OF 1798.

Dear Dunn,—I persuade myself you will not be sorry to receive a few lines from a very sincere friend on this side of the Atlantic, and to hear some account of affairs in this country. Indeed, I would have put you to this trouble sooner if we had not all been in daily expectation of seeing you. You have not sustained any great loss of comfort by your absence, for we have lived in a state of perpetual anxiety and danger almost ever since you left Ireland. You have heard, no doubt, the general history of the rebellion here, and perhaps from what we all know of the state of preparation in which the minds of a great majority of the people were, it did not much surprise you. I send you by this conveyance the report of the Committees of the two Houses, which will give you more detailed information on the subject than you may probably have met with.

Though it appears that Government had very early notice of the designs of the United Irishmen and of the full extent of them, and though they had come to a very early resolution of putting them down by force and coercion merely, they certainly made no preparations, correspondent with this resolution, for this event, which must have been foreseen. Sir Ralph Abercrombie had come over here as Commander-in-Chief and had begun to put the army on a respectable footing, but some noblemen who were colonels of Militia regiments took offence at his conduct, and he was obliged to go away. The consequence was that, at the time of the public

bursting out of the rebellion on the 23rd of May last, the Government was in a situation totally unable to cope with the insurgents. The plans of these latter had been laid with so much judgment and pursued with so much activity and perseverance that it still remains to me a matter of much astonishment how they could have failed. The immediate preservation of the country was owing to the yeomanry. The early example set by the Lawyers Corps, in particular, and their zeal and alacrity when the hour of danger came, produced, I am convinced, the most happy consequences over the whole Kingdom. Notwithstanding all their exertions Dublin very narrowly escaped falling into the hands of the enemy, both at the first breaking out of the business and afterwards in the progress of it, and I have little doubt in my own mind that, if even the small body of 1,000 French who since landed at Killala had arrived during the rebellion and while Lord Camden was here, the country would have been subdued. The measures, both military and civil, of Lord Cornwallis have very much altered the face of our affairs, and if he shall be effectually supported by those who affect to be the friends of Government, or if he shall be even suffered to pursue his own views, there is some reason to hope that all things may end quietly here. The late victories in the Mediterranean and the recent and total failure of the French expedition against this country have at the least given us a breathing time, and if the interval be wisely used I think there will be left but a very small and contemptible party in favour of revolutionary measures. The mind of the North of Ireland has certainly undergone a material change. The conduct of the Great Nation to America, Switzerland, Holland, Italy, &c., has completely opened their eyes as to what they may expect from them, and besides, the novelty and new fanglement of revolutionary clubs and committees having worn off, I believe the great body of those who were disaffected are now disposed to mind their business and dismiss politics from their thoughts. The great danger appears to me to result from the Catholic question. When you were here there were, I believe, but very few 'Orangemen,' and these confined principally to the county of Armagh. They have since grown into a very formidable body, and in almost every part of the Kingdom. They are composed almost entirely of red-hot Protestant ascendancy men; you know the degree of political sagacity and moderation possessed by that description of city and country gentlemen here, and how conciliating they would probably be both in act and expression towards their Catholic brethren. The fact is that partly owing to the insolence of their

language on all occasions, and to the oppressiveness of their conduct in many instances, and partly owing to the artful exaggerations of this by the disaffected party, the Catholics, the lower orders of them particularly, have been taught to believe that a systematic plan has been formed for their extermination; and they have been disposed to recriminate, and in many instances have done so in the most dreadful manner; insomuch so that in some parts of the country, particularly in Wexford and Kildare, whole districts have been laid waste and the Protestant inhabitants either murdered or forced to fly. Lord Cornwallis has in every instance discouraged this Orange system, in which they had even been so absurd as to involve the Militia and marching regiments, and to make all the Protestant soldiers wear Orange emblems as a test of loyalty, the consequence of which to our army, three fourths of whom are Roman Catholics, you may readily conceive. This spirit has been a good deal checked by the marked disapprobation of Lord Cornwallis, but is still far from being subdued; and if it should succeed so far as to make the question of loyal or disloyal narrow itself into that of Protestant or Papist, I absolutely must despair of the safety of this country.

Have I tired you with politics, or shall I proceed to tell you that there are very prevalent rumours of an union being in immediate contemplation of the British Cabinet? Indeed I have stronger ground than mere rumour for supposing that such a measure is in agitation, and even that the heads of the plan have been digested. The measure has long been a favourite one with the British Government, and perhaps this may be thought a favourable moment for bringing it forward—when moderate men are disgusted with the excesses which have taken place on the popular side. I cannot, however, suffer myself to think that it will be thought prudent to make the experiment when it is known how rooted an opposition must be given to it by all those persons and classes of persons who are most likely to influence, and may indeed be said to constitute, the public mind here; at the same time, if the people of England concur in it, there is little doubt that they can procure a majority in this Parliament to adopt it, and that it would for the present be submitted to, but it seems to me equally clear that in the course of not many years it would be followed by a separation, an event ruinous both to Great Britain and Ireland.

It is now full time for me to give you some private news of some of your friends here. To begin with myself, I have come into Parliament for one of Lord Charlemont's seats, which he proposed to me in a very handsome and flattering manner. Whether I have

acted a prudent part in at all coming into Parliament I do not know. In all events, the situation in which I am placed corresponds perfectly with my sentiments, and I am at liberty to act in a manner which, though it cannot recommend me to my *party*, yet I think may be not without some use to the country. Your friend Dobbs is my colleague. The only alterations which have taken place at the Bar are the retirement of Burston, the death of Mark Beresford, and the advancement of Wolfe to the King's Bench in the room of Clonmel. His (Clonmel's) good fortune accompanied him to the very last: he died on the night of the 22nd May, immediately previous to the day on which the rebellion broke out, and on which the city of Dublin was to have been seized and the principal members of the aristocracy destroyed. I assure you many sagacious people augured very favourably to the revolution from that circumstance. All those changes have hitherto produced very little effect on the Bar, as the terrors of the revolution had nearly put a stop to all business, so that on your return you will find things pretty nearly *in statu quo*. Bob Day has been made a Judge in the place of Bob Boyd who resigned, and Luke Fox has turned patriot. Politicians pretend to connect these events in the relation of cause and effect; for my part I give no opinion. Your friend Barrington was promoted on the death of Flood to the place of Judge of the Admiralty, which you know is held during good behaviour, and Egan was appointed to succeed Day as Judge of Kilmainham, which office, in order to gratify him, has been by an Act of last session made independent of the Crown. Those two great patriots have so much of the old Roman feeling about them that no considerations of gratitude could restrain their zeal for the public, and accordingly they have been in violent opposition during the whole of the Session: you see there is still some virtue left amongst us. Arthur O'Connor and a large cargo of Irish patriots are on the point of departure. It is said they are intended as a present for America. I doubt much whether they will not be considered as an acquisition. You will be surprised at seeing in the report of the Committee of the Lords some facts relative to Grattan. In consequence of his acquiescing under that statement without any attempt at denial, he has been struck off the list of the Privy Council and disfranchised by most of our corporations. I lament that he has subjected himself to any degradation, for such a man is much wanting to Ireland.

The Ponsonbys have absented themselves from Parliament, grand juries, and all part in the constituted authorities, &c. Their whole party (Bowes Daly, &c.) have pursued the same course.



Latterly they seemed disposed to relent a little, but I should suppose they are not yet quite satisfied how things will turn out, and they have already had enough of guessing. Toler, in his new situation of Attorney-General, is just as dignified and discreet as you would have supposed. Jack Stewart, solicitor, and Osborne counsel to the Commissioners. I think I have given you a sufficient dose of public and private history. Your friends here are anxious in their turn to hear something from you about your side of the water, but would rather learn it from yourself in person than by letter. We are indeed all very anxious to see you here again speedily, and lament that any business should be of sufficient importance to detain you so long, though there never was a time at which a professional man might with more impunity have been absent than hitherto. I think, however, things will now very rapidly alter, and I am sure you will not think it an impertinent intrusion in me to tell you that all your professional friends here look anxiously for your return, and hope it will not be deferred a great while longer. Let me assure you that there is not one among them who more sincerely and affectionately wishes for it than I do. If this should find you in America and you should make any further stay there, I hope you will let me have a few lines from you, and let me know if there is anything I can do for you here until you return. Your family are all well—I need say nothing particular of them, as they write to you by this conveyance. The D—— joins me in affectionate regards to you, as do Mrs. Plunket and my sisters.

Believe me, dear Dunn,

Very truly and affectionately yours,

W. C. PLUNKET.

Dublin, October 22, 1798.



## VI

## SIR BOYLE ROCHE

HERODOTUS is not more indisputably the father of history than is Sir Boyle Roche the father of bulls. No doubt there were makers of bulls before his day, even as brave men lived before Agamemnon; but they are not remembered, and if their bulls have survived them they are credited to Sir Boyle by a posterity generously forgiving and forgetful of his famous indictment. It is true that Richard Lovell Edgeworth, in his once celebrated Essay on Irish Bulls—of which, by the way, the only readable pages were written by his daughter—makes no mention of his still more celebrated contemporary. But then Richard Edgeworth, with all his peculiarities, was a gentleman of the old school; and in 1800 it was not considered good form to put one's acquaintances into a book. Besides, it may be doubted whether Edgeworth really knew what a bull is. Judged by his illustrations, he certainly did not. Thus he quotes as an example of a bull the blunder of the French gentleman who, in endeavouring to compliment an actress, replied to her modest self-depreciation that 'to act that part a person should be young and handsome,' 'Ah madam! you are a complete proof to the contrary.' This is a blunder, a *gaucherie*, but it is surely not a bull. Edgeworth's object, however, was to prove that the form of blunder known as a bull is not peculiarly Irish, and, like all special pleaders, he loses himself occasionally in the refinements of his own arguments, frequently confounding the exaggeration of hyperbole with the extravagance of a bull.

But we must not press too hardly on a writer who lacked the enlightening definitions which have been supplied by

subsequent interpreters from the days of Sydney Smith to those of the editor of the 'New English Dictionary.' The latter, by the way, supports Richard Edgeworth's view. He defines a bull as 'a self-contradictory proposition; an expression containing a manifest contradiction in terms, or involving a ludicrous inconsistency unperceived by the speaker; now often with epithet Irish, but the word had been long in use before it became associated with Irishmen.' By way of illustrating the latter assertion, the editor quotes from the letter of a soldier in the year 1702: 'These gentlemen seem to me to have copied the bull of their countryman, who said his mother was barren.' The context of this is not given, but one would be inclined to lay odds that the gentlemen were Irishmen, in which case a very respectable antiquity is ascribed to what the editor alleges to be only a very modern connection between bulls and Irishmen. Sydney Smith's attempt comes nearer the mark. 'A bull,' he says, 'is an apparent congruity and real incongruity of ideas suddenly discovered.' But these and all other definitions miss one of the chief elements in the humour of a bull, which is surely the unconsciousness of its author when making it. The essence of a bull is really indefinable; but, fortunately, this does not matter, for the distinction of a real bull is that it is instantly recognisable as such. And this it is which gives Sir Boyle Roche his acknowledged pre-eminence. All his authentic bulls are manifest at once for what they are. They are absurdities incapable of explanation, but needing none; verbally irreconcilable in their contradictions, yet unmistakably conveying the meaning intended. They are lucid obscurities, in which the verbal confusion is not sufficient to conceal the speaker's idea. When, for instance, Sir Boyle asserted that 'the best way to avoid danger is to meet it plump,' he only gave awkward expression in a ludicrous form to a serious truth. The bull may pass for an aphorism. Sir Jonah Barrington, atoning in this as in other cases for the inaccuracy of his facts by the shrewdness of his observation, notes that Sir Boyle seldom launched a blunder from which some fine

maxim might not be extracted. Every one is familiar in the modern House of Commons with the amendments which he deprecated in the Irish one—‘amendments which make matters worse;’ and inspectors of weights and measures, as well as the bibulous public, have had reason before now to sympathise with his proposed bill to enact that ‘a quart bottle should hold a quart.’ His bulls however are not always quite so pointed. Sir Boyle’s infelicitous mode of conveying an invitation to a noble lord to partake of his hospitality is among the best known of his blunders:—‘I hope, my lord, if ever you come within a mile of my house, that you’ll stay there all night,’ a blunder which has a family resemblance to the most immortal of all his bulls, that of the bird in two places at once.

It is not a little strange, and is certainly subversive of the popular conception of him as the Fool of the Grattan Parliament, that the greater part of Sir Boyle Roche’s public career was passed in the discharge of the duties of an office for which a dignified and decorous demeanour is among the chief essentials. The member of Parliament who survives in popular recollection as a mountebank and buffoon held for close on a quarter of a century the office of Gentleman Usher and Master of the Ceremonies to the Irish Court. If he was also unofficially appointed to the post of Court Jester, he knew when to lay aside his cap and bells, and took care to observe all the minutiae of Viceregal ceremony. We find Lord Charlemont referring to his approval as a necessary condition precedent to a visit from the Lord Lieutenant. His Excellency (Lord Camden) will honour him thus ‘if etiquette and Sir Boyle permit.’ It is perhaps worth while, in recalling some of the specimens of unconscious humour which have made Sir Boyle Roche’s name so familiar, to gather together the few facts regarding his life which seem worth preserving, and which, at so great a distance from his death, it still remains possible to collect from sundry scattered sources.

Sir Boyle, who was born in 1736, was the youngest of three sons of Jordan Roche, a small squire in the county

Galway, whose immediate ancestors had migrated to Connaught, embracing the less disagreeable of Cromwell's compulsory alternatives. Whether or not his boast was warranted that he 'had more *Macs* and *O's* in his name than all the O'Callaghans, O'Brallaghans, and O'Briens put together,' there is no doubt that Sir Boyle came of ancient Irish lineage—the Galway Roches being a branch of the family of which Lord Fermoy was the head. Prior to their exodus they had occupied a good position in Limerick, of which city Sir Boyle's great-grandfather had been four times Mayor. His grandfather's adherence to the loyalist cause was the origin of the family misfortunes to which Sir Boyle thus referred in the Irish House of Commons. 'I am descended from a noble family in this country, who lost high honours and extensive properties for their loyalty. They sacrificed everything that was dear in this life to support a race of kings in their time to whom they swore fealty and allegiance.'

At the Restoration the exiled family made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain possession of their old lands in Limerick; but their loyalty to the Stuarts gained for the head of the family the barren honour of being created an Irish peer—Lord Tarbert of Cahirvalla was his title—by James II., after the deposition of that monarch. A sister of this gentleman was married to Sir Toby Butler, the Irish Solicitor-General of James II., who is known in history as the draughtsman of the Treaty of Limerick, and of whose life the only other recorded incident marks him as an appropriate branch of Sir Boyle's family tree. Sir Toby, it appears, like not a few of his contemporaries, was fond of his glass; but on one occasion, being engaged in an important suit, he was induced by his attorney to pledge himself not to touch a drop of liquor until the conclusion of the trial. Having gained the verdict, Sir Toby was congratulated by his attorney both on his forensic success, and on the abstinence which was assumed to have contributed not a little thereto. 'Not so fast,' replied the advocate; 'I pledged my word I would not drink a drop of claret till I had concluded

my argument, and no more I did. But I soaked two fresh penny loaves in two bottles of claret, and I ate them !'

The Roche family was, of course, originally Roman Catholic, and it does not appear at what period its head conformed to the established religion. Probably it was Sir Boyle's father who 'verted at the same time that he sold his Galway estate and settled in co. Limerick. Through his mother, Sir Boyle was connected with Lord Kenmare's family, a connection which had its consequences in the best-known episode in Roche's career as an active politician. Young Roche early embraced a military career, and is stated to have been present at the siege of Quebec. He certainly served in America and the West Indies, where he won considerable distinction ; and by 1770 he had attained the rank of major in the 28th Foot. On the breaking out of the American war of independence Roche was among the first to volunteer for service, and, 'attended by his captain and a grand procession, beat up for recruits in Limerick, and met with great success,' raising as many as five hundred recruits for the King's army. 'He was the first man of rank,' says the historian of Limerick, 'who, when the war broke out in America, with an honest zeal for his Majesty's service, beat up in person for recruits. Lord Kenmare gave half a guinea additional bounty to every recruit.' On his retirement from the army Roche was appointed to a small sinecure in the Revenue, and at once entered Parliament. He remained a member of the Irish House of Commons down to the Union, sitting successively for the boroughs of Tralee, Gowran, Portarlinton, and Old Leighlin. In 1778 he was appointed Gentleman Usher to the Lord Lieutenant, receiving a knighthood at the same time. In 1780 the functions of Master of the Ceremonies were added to those he already discharged, and in 1782 he received a baronetcy from Lord Temple, the Lord Lieutenant. Sir Boyle retained his position of Gentleman Usher and Master of the Ceremonies, as well as his seat in Parliament, down to the Union, but on the demise of the Grattan Parliament he did not seek election to the Imperial legislature. He made several attempts to secure a peerage ; and seems to



have gone very near attaining that object during Lord Westmorland's administration. Indeed, it seems strange that at a period when peerages were so often the direct and immediate reward of political service, so diligent a promoter of ministerial interests should have failed to reach the dignity he desired. In 1801 he resigned his position at Court, receiving a pension of 300*l.* a year, subsequently raised to 400*l.* He died in Dublin, June 4, 1807.

Such are the main landmarks in Sir Boyle Roche's career, with the important exception of his marriage to Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas Frankland, a Yorkshire baronet. Sir Boyle, proud of this alliance with an English family of ancient lineage, is said to have been fond of referring to Sir Thomas's kindness in having given him his eldest daughter—a boast which provoked Curran's retort, 'Ay, Sir Boyle! and, depend on it, if he had had an older one, he would have given her to you.' Whether it was this sarcasm which provoked Sir Boyle's hostility, or that an enmity had already been created between Roche and Curran, it is certain that the two men were perpetually sparring at each other in the House of Commons, as the debates of the Irish Parliament testify. Nor was the witty advocate and orator always successful in these encounters. One biting repartee survives to disprove Curran's assertion that all Sir Boyle's sayings were carefully elaborated. The former had observed one night, somewhat magniloquently, that he needed aid from no one, and could be 'the guardian of his own honour;' whereupon Sir Boyle instantly interjected his sarcastic congratulations to the honourable member on his possession of a sinecure.

It was, however, by no means exclusively as a master of tart repartee that Sir Boyle acquired his unique reputation as a Parliamentary humorist of the highest order. On the contrary, it was mainly by virtue of his genial manners and kindness of disposition, joined to his extraordinary facility for felicitous blundering, that he was enabled to attain the position of first favourite with all parties in the House. 'Such was his humour,' says a contemporary, 'that he could

at any time change the temper of the House. Through his pleasant interference the most angry debates have frequently concluded with peals of laughter.' Such a talent was naturally useful to ministers, who often found Sir Boyle Roche's bull a better answer to a troublesome opposition than any which the front bench could offer. Who could pursue further the prosaic and utilitarian argument that a grant from the Exchequer would operate unjustly on the taxpayers of a future generation in the face of Sir Boyle's triumphant interrogative, 'Why should we put ourselves out of our way to do anything for posterity; for what has posterity done for us?'

The debates of the Grattan Parliament are unexplained and unaccompanied by any such pleasantly instructive commentaries as those which Mr. Lucy has provided for the information of future generations. The prosaic and businesslike methods of Parliamentary reporters of the old school disdained the irrelevancies of applause or hilarity. There are no sign-posts, no 'cheers and laughter' in brackets to quickly direct the student to Sir Boyle Roche's bulls, and the 'Essence of Parliament' is only to be distilled by diligent perusal of the memoirs and correspondence of contemporary celebrities. It is likely, too, that just as the friendly reporter of to-day trims and smoothes the slipshod rhetoric of our modern legislators, the decorous editor of these old debates expunged many of Sir Boyle Roche's choicest *mots*. But, despite these drawbacks, the 'Parliamentary Register of the House of Commons of Ireland' enables us to get a very fair idea of the Parliamentary oratory of the member for Tralee. Here, for example, is his method of diverting the attention of the House from the powerful speech in which Curran had recommended a motion for an inquiry into abuses in the Boards of Stamps and Accounts:—

Though I am in point of consequence the smallest man among the respectable majority in this House, yet I cannot help feeling the heavy shower of the honourable gentleman's illiberal and unfounded abuse. If I had his advantage of

being bred to the learned profession of the law, I should be the better enabled to follow the honourable gentleman through the long windings of his declamation; by such means I should be blest with the gift of the gab, and could declaim for an hour or two upon the turning of a straw, and yet say nothing to the purpose; then I could stamp and stare, and rend and tear, and look up to the gods and goddesses for approbation, etc., etc.

Again, in a similar strain of irrelevant but good-humoured absurdity, he is found laughing away the effects of one of Grattan's most passionate pieces of declamation by a ludicrous hypothesis:—

Pray, Mr. Speaker, would it not be very comical if I should become a Whig? I wonder how I should look? But if that day should ever come, then we, the Whigs, in opposition, will feel ourselves warranted by present experience to discharge a demi-culverin of filth on the Tories (who now call themselves Whigs), that shall so daub and besmear them that they shall only be fit for the hospital for incurables.

On another occasion he expressed his antipathy to a petition from the Dissenters of Belfast in favour of the Catholics in these uncompromising terms:—

Now the question is whether we will receive the insidious petition of a turbulent, disorderly set of people whom no king can govern, or no God can please; or whether we shall treat it with merited contempt. For my part, I call on you to dispose of it by tossing it over the bar, and kicking it into the lobby; and I am determined to divide the House on it, even if I should stand alone in so just a cause.

It is not difficult to understand that burlesque of this kind, delivered in a rich brogue, endeared Sir Boyle to an assembly not unwilling to be amused; and as his verbal oddities were not inconsistent with a soldierly appearance, or the manners of a well-bred gentleman and courtier occupying a dignified position at the Viceregal Court, he enjoyed exceptional facilities for turning his humour, conscious and

unconscious, to account. Even his opponents had a kindly word for the genial Master of the Ceremonies. The author of 'Irish Political Characters,' an opposition scribe, thus sketches him in 1799, towards the close of his career :—

He speaks often, although under the greatest disadvantages; for to oratory he has not, and surely cannot imagine himself to have, the most distant pretensions. Of all *broqueers* he is the greatest. His language is neither simple, correct, nor pure, seemingly the spontaneous production of the moment, though conceived with ease, yet delivered with difficulty; in a high degree quaint, and richly ornamented with that flower of rhetoric called a bull. His action is vehement and forcible. In reasoning, he has occasionally much dry humour, and is not destitute at times of point and sarcastic allusion.

He had an excellent memory; so good, indeed, as to give rise to the belief that his speeches were written for him by abler hands, and got by heart by Sir Boyle. On one occasion he illustrated the accuracy of his memory and the audacity of his character at the expense of a brother member. Mr. Serjeant Stanley, anxious to produce an effect in an important debate, had been at the pains to reduce his speech to writing. Unluckily for himself, the Serjeant happened to drop his manuscript in the coffee-room, and walked back into the House unconscious of his loss. Sir Boyle Roche, picking up the document, speedily made himself master of its contents, and, rising at the first opportunity, delivered the speech almost verbatim in the hearing of its dismayed and astonished author. Sir Boyle's apology, when he had finished, only added insult to injury. 'Here, my dear Stanley, is your speech again, and I thank you kindly for the loan of it. I never was so much at a loss for a speech in the whole course of my life; and sure it is not a pin the worse for the wear.' On another occasion he amused and relieved the House, when irritated by the prospect of being obliged to listen to the reading of a mass of documents as a preliminary to a resolution, by suggesting that a dozen or so of clerks should be called in, who might read the documents

simultaneously and thus dispose of the business in a few minutes.

Notwithstanding the frequency of his appearances on the floor of the House, he was not above pleading the time-honoured excuses of the rhetorical tyro, and is to be found commencing an harangue with the stale exordium 'Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking.' But possibly Sir Boyle was the inventor of this classic phrase. Of actual bulls the Debates do not afford many specimens, though a few genuine ones are to be found in them. Deprecating a charge of inequality in the commercial relations between Great Britain and Ireland, he observed that 'he is an enemy to both kingdoms who wishes to diminish the brotherly affection of the two sister countries.' The petition of the citizens of Belfast in favour of the Roman Catholics he described as 'an airy fabric based upon a sandy foundation.' In the discussions on the Union he observed that, 'whatever clamour might be raised by interested men against a legislative union, he would venture to prophesy that the country would arrive at that state that when the Day of Judgment would come, the people of Ireland would call out and implore for an Union.' His readiness to give up 'not only a part, but, if necessary, even the whole of our constitution to preserve the remainder' is worthy of the most advanced disciples of a Tory Democracy. To Junius he referred as 'an anonymous writer named Junius,' and he was heard on another occasion to 'answer boldly in the affirmative "No"!' In deprecating the excesses of the French Revolution he conjured up a gruesome picture of the unbridled fury of the mob. 'Here, perhaps, sir, the murderous Marshal Law Men (Marseillois) would break in, cut us to mincemeat, and throw our bleeding heads on that table to stare us in the face.' His intervention in debate was sometimes deprecated by the Opposition, which, on one occasion, tried to cough him down. He met the interruption by producing some bullets, with the observation—'I have here some excellent pills to cure a cough.' His personal courage being beyond dis-



pute, this jest in earnest was quite sufficient in those duelling days to procure attention for the remainder of his speech.<sup>1</sup>

From these specimens of his Parliamentary style it will be gathered that Sir Boyle was not a very serious politician, or at least that he did not take a very serious view of his duties as a member of Parliament. And although he made himself useful to the administration and was employed as a go-between in more than one matter of delicacy and importance, his most notable appearances in the political arena only serve to emphasise this want of seriousness. His best-known achievement in this capacity is his extraordinary intervention in the proceedings of the Volunteer Convention of 1783, in which he acted a part only less remarkable than his immunity from the opprobrium which might have been expected to attach to it. One of the principal questions before the Convention was that of the admission of Roman Catholics to the franchise; and it was an object of importance to the Irish Government to prevent this question from receiving the impetus which a resolution of the Convention in its favour would be likely to give to it. To defeat the supporters of the movement, Lord Northington, the Lord-Lieutenant, and his advisers availed themselves of the services of Sir Boyle Roche, whose family connections with Lord Kenmare and others enabled him to assume the part of an accredited exponent of the sentiments of the Roman Catholic aristocracy. Sir Boyle accordingly authorised a leading member of the Convention to announce on the part of Lord Kenmare, when the question came up for discussion, that the Roman Catholic leaders had abandoned the notion of demanding further enfranchisement. On reference to Lord Kenmare it turned out that that nobleman had never authorised any such communication. The equanimity of Sir Boyle Roche was, however, quite undisturbed by this disclosure, and he defended himself by saying that Lord Kenmare being at a distance from town, he had felt warranted in making such a statement by his knowledge

<sup>1</sup> This incident is introduced by Charles Lever in his novel of *The Knight of Gwynne*.

of his lordship's sentiments. It must in justice be observed that, indefensible as was Roche's conduct on the occasion, his unauthorised statement did little injustice to Lord Kenmare's private sentiments, as appears from the guarded terms of the repudiation and from the subsequent conduct of that nobleman in relation to the Catholic claims.

Although his conduct on this occasion has left Sir Boyle Roche under the reproach of being a vehement opponent of concession to his Roman Catholic countrymen, such a view of him is contrary to his known sympathies and expressed opinions. He was one of those who, like Lords Fingall and Kenmare, as well as many liberal statesmen of the day, desired the abolition of the Penal Laws, but believed that concession to be safe must be gradual. He was really the representative in the House of Commons of the sentiments of that Catholic nobility to which he was allied; and in the debate on the Catholic petition of 1792, he amused the House of Commons with a ludicrous, if scurrilous, description of the plebeian leaders who immediately after ousted the nobility in the Catholic Convention known as the 'Back Lane Parliament.' But, on the other hand, he supported the Franchise Bill of 1793 in language which bears the impress of sincerity and earnestness. 'The Bill,' he said, 'in its present form I think a total emancipation of the Catholics, as far as is consistent with the constitution; and as that has always been my landmark, the present Bill has my entire approbation. Every person who knows me must be sensible how much I have at heart the interest of the Roman Catholics. I should act against my nature should not that be the case; I am descended from them, and my nearest and dearest connections are among them.'

Sir Boyle Roche, though he survives in popular recollection only through his bulls, his blunders, and his oddities, thus appears to have occupied a conspicuous social, and a by no means inconsiderable political position in the Ireland of his day. It speaks highly for his genuine kindliness of disposition that in times when political acrimony was unsparing in denunciation and misrepresentation, but few of

the shafts of party malice were directed against him. Had it been otherwise—had his ability been greater or his amiability less—it could never have happened that close on a century after his death he should stand as the typical representative of a mental peculiarity characteristically Irish in humour and in good-humour.

## VII

*THOMAS STEELE*

IT has often been remarked that the history of Irish politics and the careers of Irish politicians present curiously little trace of those distinctively Irish features which are commonly associated with the Irish people. The most careless, happy-go-lucky, or devil-may-care Irishman, if he takes to politics, is apt to bid good-bye to the geniality, high spirits, fun and humour which are commonly imputed to Irishmen of all creeds and classes as part of the heritage of the race. O'Connell is perhaps the only great popular leader who has carried into political contests something of the native-born humour which belonged to him; and even O'Connell was never half so much an Irishman at Westminster as in the Four Courts at Dublin. The Irish politician, to whichever party he happens to belong, is generally in such deadly earnest that he gives his natural geniality little or no chance of asserting itself. Even in the old Irish House of Commons, where the atmosphere might be supposed to have been more favourable to native wit, the tone of political discussion was just as serious as it is at Westminster. A professional buffoon like Sir Boyle Roche might occasionally startle the legislators of College Green out of their decorum; but as a rule it was the warmth of Irish blood rather than the sunshine of Irish temperament that evidenced the nationality of that celebrated assembly. Duels were more frequent than jests in College Green. No effort of the imagination can figure Grattan perpetrating a joke; and even such a wit as Curran scattered little of the golden coin of his fancy about the benches of the House of Commons.

The half-forgotten Sancho Panza—not that his eminently

practical leader was at all a Quixote—who was O'Connell's henchman through the abortive struggles for repeal as well as during the victorious battle for Catholic Emancipation, is no exception to the general rule that an Irishman takes his politics in deadly earnest; but as there have always been people who, though not witty themselves, are the cause of wit in others, so the whimsical eccentricities of 'Honest Tom Steele' provide an element of comedy which is no unwelcome admixture in the stormy and tragic drama in which he played a not inconsiderable part. For wild, erratic, and rash as he certainly was, eccentric to the point of absurdity as he often appeared in speech, demeanour, and dress, Steele was an important factor in O'Connell's success. A Protestant and a landlord, his support of the Liberator, whom he seconded at the nomination, was invaluable at the Clare Election, and, indeed, it was largely by his advice that O'Connell was guided when he took the momentous decision to oppose the re-election of Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald. Sheil, who was certainly well qualified to judge, has left it on record that to Steele's influence and exertions the triumph of O'Connell on that extraordinary occasion is largely to be ascribed.

Thomas Steele came of an old Somersetshire family, a branch of which had at the time of his birth been settled for more than a century in the county Clare, where there was a not inconsiderable property to which the future agitator succeeded at an early age on the death of his uncle. His father, William Steele, died before he was born. A Protestant and a landowner, young Steele received the training natural to his birth and position. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated in 1810, and from thence he went to Cambridge, at which University he also proceeded to a degree. Independent of personal exertion, he appears, nevertheless, to have qualified himself for the profession of engineering, and became an Associate of the Institute of Civil Engineers; but he made no attempt to turn his acquirements to practical advantage, for the patenting of an invention called the 'communicating diving



hell,' of which he published an account in the 'London Philosophical Magazine,' can scarcely be considered as a serious exercise of his professional attainments. His scientific tastes, however, led him to project from time to time schemes for the development of the material resources of his native country through the agency of engineering. In 1828 he published a work designed to propound proposals for the improvement of the Shannon navigation. How far his projects were feasible from a professional point is hardly worth inquiring now ; but the curious twist of impracticability and oddity which showed itself in almost every action of Steele's life, exhibited itself in the whimsicality which led him to incorporate in the same volume which contained this highly technical disquisition on the engineering difficulties of river navigation, a strange medley of politics. The conjunction of Defoe's celebrated essay on the apparition of Mrs. Veal with the pious and ponderous platitudes of Drelincourt on Death was not more incongruous than the inappropriate blend of science and politics which was introduced to the public under a title of extraordinary length, with an oddly inappropriate motto.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his life Steele manifested an intense enthusiasm for lost causes and forlorn hopes. Sheil in his sketches describes how in the Spanish war of 1821 he joined the patriot army, 'and fought with desperate valour upon the batteries of the Trocadero.' The sincerity of his devotion to the struggle of the Spanish insurgents in their endeavour to overturn the monarchy was attested by his raising the sum of 10,000*l.* by a mortgage on his family property, every farthing of which was expended in the purchase of stores and supplies for the expedition fitted out for the assistance of

<sup>1</sup> *Practical Suggestions on the General Improvement of the Navigation of the Shannon between Limerick and the Atlantic ; and more particularly of that part of it named by Pilots 'The Narrows,' with some remarks intended to create a doubt of the fairness of not keeping faith with the Irish Roman Catholics after they had been lured into a Surrender of Limerick (their principal fortress) by a Treaty.* By Thomas Steele, Esq., one of the Protestant members of the Irish Catholic Association, M.A. Magdalene College, Cambridge, and an Associate Member of the London Institute of Civil Engineers.

the rebel forces. He returned from Spain surrounded by Spanish exiles, to whose wants he ministered, and published his 'Notes on the Conduct of the War in Spain.' But this book is curiously devoid of incidents, and bears but few marks either of the picturesque enthusiasm of its author, or of those moving accidents of war which might be expected in the record of a civil struggle.

Shortly after this episode, the struggle for Emancipation becoming acute, Steele attached himself to O'Connell, and thenceforward his whole career was devoted to the Irish National movement, and his whole being merged in an absolute, unquestioning devotion to the person of the Liberator. In fact, he almost ceased to have any independent identity or separate volition, and almost the only notices of him which remain are to be found in references contained in the biographies of his 'Chief.' When O'Connell died it was time for Steele to die too. His once ample competence had been by that time completely wasted by his sacrifices to the causes he had embraced; and his formerly exuberant spirits experienced the reaction common to sanguine and unbalanced natures. He attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Thames off Waterloo Bridge, and though rescued from drowning he died, a broken spirit, a few days later on June 15, 1848. His remains were brought to Ireland, and the faithful henchman lies beside his master in the cemetery of Glasnevin.

Though his part in the struggles of his time, important as it was, was relatively small, Steele's is unquestionably one of the most picturesque and attractive figures in the history of Irish popular movements, and it may be worth while by a few anecdotes to attempt to convey a just idea of his whimsical character and of those qualities of integrity and patriotism, bravery and simplicity, which won for him a unique place in the regard of opponents as well as of friends, procuring him the title, by which he will always be known in the annals of Catholic Emancipation and of the Repeal Movement, of 'Honest Tom Steele.'

Of the extravagant oddity of Steele's character the illus-

trations are numerous, and there is little doubt that his eccentricity reached almost the verge of insanity. Sir James O'Connell, a brother of the great Dan, who was not however always or altogether sympathetic with his relative's doings, was once asked why a man of O'Connell's sagacity had appointed a semi-lunatic to the post of 'Head Pacificator of Ireland,' as Steele was usually called. 'Why, indeed!' answered James, dealing a double-edged thrust at his brother and his brother's lieutenant, 'pray, who the devil else would take such an office?' But this is probably an extreme view, for James O'Connell was fond of putting things in this caustic way; and once being asked at what period his brother's money troubles commenced, he replied, 'Well, Dan was a couple of years older than me, and I don't remember him till he was fourteen; but he was in trouble then and never got out of it since.'

At O'Connell's second election for Clare he was opposed, it is curious to remember, by William Smith O'Brien, afterwards the leader of the Young Ireland movement, but who in 1829 acted with the landed gentry in opposition to the champion of Emancipation. Speaking on the hustings in the course of the contest, O'Brien affirmed that O'Connell was not supported by any of the gentry of Clare, whereupon Steele promptly challenged and fought him, considering himself personally affronted, in the character of a Clare landowner, by a speech which was certainly never intended to apply to him individually. Mr. O'Neill Daunt, one of Steele's contemporaries and comrades in the O'Connell agitation, includes in his memoirs several anecdotes of Steele's peculiarities. Among his idiosyncrasies was a love of pompous and high-sounding, and withal vehement, language, which reminds one of Walter Savage Landor, as caricatured by Dickens in 'Bleak House,' and which, applied to the most trivial occasions, often sounded ridiculous enough. In the midst of some tremendous invective against one Peter Purcell, who had treated his chief with disrespect O'Connell sought to mollify him by saying he had himself fully forgiven Purcell. 'You may forgive him, Liberator

replied Steele; 'in the discharge of your ethereal functions as the Moral Regenerator of Ireland you may forgive him, but I also have my own functions to perform; and I tell you that, as your Head Pacificator of Ireland, I never can forgive the diabolical villain.'

At a political meeting held in Tralee on a bitterly inclement day, the sufferings of a poor harper who, in the intervals between the speeches, sought to enliven the audience by snatches of Irish airs which his half-frozen fingers scarcely suffered him to play, aroused the commiseration of O'Connell's daughter. 'Pray do something for that poor fellow,' she said to Steele; 'he looks very miserable.' 'Make your mind easy about him, daughter of Ireland's Liberator,' answered the Pacificator. 'I have taken care of the bard. I have made him immortal. By virtue of my office I have constituted him O'Connell's chief musician.'

Though violent in his language, Steele had a great and sincere horror of outrage, and occasionally took curious methods of showing his reprobation. On one occasion his account for expenses, when presented to the Committee of the Repeal Association, was found to include a charge for a large quantity of black crape. Asked for particulars of this expenditure, Steele explained that he desired to show the authors of an agrarian murder in Tipperary that their crime had put the Association in mourning, and accordingly he had travelled through the county with his carriage thickly draped with the trappings and suits of woe, and displaying a laurel branch, being the nearest available approach to an olive, likewise enfolded in the same material. On another occasion, when disturbance and outrage in the county Limerick threatened to compromise the national cause in the eyes of its English sympathisers, the Pacificator appeared on the scene solemnly waving a white flag edged with green, and displaying the legend, 'Whoever commits a crime adds strength to the enemy.'

Steele's devotion to O'Connell was as absolute and as genuine as the devotion of a dog to its master, and was not the less sincere because it was expressed with his usual



rhetorical exaggeration. 'If my august leader, O'Connell, were to say to me, "Steele, place yourself upon that mine; it is about to be sprung, and you will lose your life, but it will be in the cause of Ireland," I would do it on the instant.' There are not many allusions in O'Connell's letters to the most whole-hearted and devoted of his followers; but there is no doubt that the great man both understood and appreciated the affection with which he was regarded. His son, John O'Connell, in his 'Recollections and Experiences' (a poor book, but one which throws a good deal of light on the history of O'Connell's agitation), does justice to his father's friend; and his eulogy of Steele as 'one of the most single-minded, kind, and chivalrous-souled men that ever breathed' may be taken as the expression of O'Connell's own esteem.

John O'Connell describes the occasion of the only estrangement which ever occurred between leader and follower, and it was one peculiarly characteristic of the latter's fanciful and quixotic disposition. Steele, who was never married, was smitten on a chance encounter in the streets of Ennis with a passionate admiration for a young lady whose beauty took entire possession of his heart. With his usual openness and simplicity he made no attempt to disguise his feelings from any one save their object. 'I have no hope,' he told O'Connell. 'I do not know the young lady, and I will not get myself introduced, for I am too poor a man to offer her my hand. But she is the only woman I ever have loved, and ever will love, and I shall love her till my death.' O'Connell, naturally enough, treated this extravagant declaration with good-natured ridicule; but his defective sympathy nearly cost him the friendship of his follower, who declared that he could no longer act in politics under a leader who had so misunderstood him. It is said that he actually retired for some months from the agitation, and was only with difficulty mollified by an absolute withdrawal of O'Connell's well-meant but injudicious criticisms. But if the misunderstanding was serious, the reconciliation was complete. Steele's devotion to his 'leader and the Father of his country'



continued to the death of the latter, and as Mr. Daunt says, 'when O'Connell died, life lost all its savour for Tom Steele. His heart and soul had been wrapped up in the movement of which his defeated chief was the leader. To him there seemed nothing left worth living for.'

Steele has been described by one who knew him well as a 'political Ossian.' The description is not inappropriate to the fanciful exaltation of his temperament and the vague but grandiose character of his sentiment and expressions. It does not seem likely that the comparison with Ossian was made with any reference to Steele's literary productions, which, as has already been noted, were published in a form singularly unfitted to attract a reader, and have long since gone to the limbo of forgotten pamphlets. But quaintly interspersed in the pages of his pamphlets on the Shannon, between dry demonstrations of mechanical problems and bold declarations of political views, are to be found passages which possess just that sort of wild beauty which might have prompted such a parallel. Perhaps nowhere in English prose could a more perfect example be found of Celtic melancholy than is contained in the closing sentences of the extract with which this brief epitaph may well conclude:—

There is a spot upon a mountain promontory in Fingal where, in my early boyhood, external nature first burst upon my vision in beauty and sublimity, not separated, but in combination. Upon the eastern side of the solitary mountain, where it shelves abruptly to the sea, and so near to its summit that there was a glorious expanse of horizon, was a little fountain, bursting among the rocks, and wild flowers, and sunbeams. A bee hummed over the flowers close to the fountain and its little rill; some sea-gulls whirled and floated in the air high above the sea that broke upon the shore, and there was a distant bark with white sails, holding on her course upon the swelling tide. Whenever I call this scene to remembrance, 'pure, bright, and elysian,' it floats in my imagination like a vision of enchantment. This is the pure elysian enchantment of nature, without any intermingling of feelings inspired by the history of the times of old. 'Canst thou loosen the bonds of Orion, or canst thou

bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades ? ' No ! and there are other sweet influences too, that, while man retains his nature, never can be bound—

There is given  
Unto the things of earth that time hath bent  
A spirit's feeling.

There is a power  
And magic in the ruined battlement.

*And when I stand in the ancient cathedral of Limerick, and listen to the choir and the organ ; when I hear the chant of the High Mass, and ringing of the Mass bell, and view the incense ascending from the Altar in one of their Convent Chapels ; when I wander through the gardens of the Holy Sisterhood of St. Clare, and view their figures gliding among the Gothic ruins, or when I stand within the sanctuary of their Convent Chapel ; when I sit upon the ancient bastion in St. Munchin's Cemetery upon a gloomy evening, and listen to the sullen sough of the wind among the dark elms over my head, and the rushing flood of the Shannon that sweeps at its basement, and hear the roar of the bugles, the beat of the drums, and the voice of the trumpet within the Court of the Castle :—I become inspired by a feeling, solemn and mournful ; different from that of which I am susceptible in any other place in the world, but not very unlike that with which, upon the shore of the solitary lake where he reposes, I hear the wind whisper at night in the grass around the grave of my father, whom I have never seen.*

## VIII

*THE FRENCH INVASION OF IRELAND IN 1798*

## I

## HUMBERT AND HIS MEN

FEW chapters in the chequered history of Ireland can have less attraction for any Irishman jealous for the honour of his country than that which is occupied with the tragic story of the Rebellion of 1798. A civil struggle, however short-lived, leaves bitter memories behind it, and of the bitterness which the Rebellion provoked or aggravated there is but too much evidence in the venomous political pamphlets by which, in the guise of historical narratives, the partisans of both sides, writing within a few years of the events, have photographed for posterity the passions of an unhappy era. Nor is there in the story of the Rebellion, viewed merely as a civil strife between Celt and Saxon upon Irish soil, much which adds to that martial renown which on more legitimate battle-fields Irishmen, of whatever origin, have never failed to win for their country. Marked as deeply with the stains of religious fanaticism as with the scars of civil rancour, the Rebellion ran its brief, unhappy, and inglorious course almost without a single heroic incident to redeem its horrors. The rank and file of the peasant army indeed exhibited the undisciplined valour of their race. In the battle of New Ross, for example, they fought with a dash and enthusiasm which no disciplined troops could have exceeded, enduring a tremendous carnage with an indifference which, probably, no disciplined troops would have shown. But the rising produced no leader capable of utilising

the reckless courage of his followers, and it is unmarked by any brilliant achievement of arms in which a sober patriotism may find some recompense for the suffering entailed by the actual conflict, or the consequences which followed in its train. Its story is, as Mr. Lecky has called it, 'a dreary and ignoble story, in which there is much to blame and very little to admire.' Murders on one side, executions and torture on the other, indiscriminate passion on both, are the pictures presented to our gaze in an impartial survey. And these sanguinary features of the struggle overshadow all the rest.

But if the story of the Rebellion itself is repulsive, the movement in which it originated led to the addition of at least one picturesque episode to the chronicles of the romance of war. The Irish insurrection of 1798, which had been prepared and promoted in entire reliance on the promise of foreign assistance, in the form either of an actual invasion of England from France or of a descent upon Ireland upon the scale of Hoche's abortive expedition to Bantry Bay, was followed by the only successful attempt of the Napoleonic wars to land a foreign force upon the shores of the Three Kingdoms. And the achievements of the little army of twelve hundred men which in the space of a few weeks overran an Irish province, defeated a superior force of British troops in an important engagement, and compelled a Viceroy who was also a distinguished soldier to marshal the whole of the forces at the disposal of the Irish Government to combat a serious peril, are full of all those elements of romance and adventure in which the Rebellion itself is notably deficient.

The story of the French invasion of Mayo has of course been often told, but lying outside the general history of the Rebellion, and robbed by the accidents which delayed it until the Rebellion had been suppressed of the immense political importance which must otherwise have attached to it, it has scarcely received its proper meed of attention from historians. The British and Irish State Papers bearing on the French invasion have long ago been carefully examined by

eminent writers, and but little of what is essential to a full knowledge of the facts, so far as it can be derived from these sources, has been left unrecounted. But the labours of French investigators, and the publication of French archives, have in quite recent years added much to the materials available on the subject. At least two works<sup>1</sup> of value and importance, though not always free from prejudice, have been based on documents in the French Admiralty and War Office; and the documents themselves have now been published under the direction of the historical section of the Staff of the French Army, in three large volumes.<sup>2</sup>

Readers of the Journals and Autobiography of Theobald Wolfe Tone have no need to be reminded of the circumstances in which, as early as 1796, the project of a French invasion of Ireland had originated. In that year Wolfe Tone, who had gone into exile a twelvemonth earlier, visited Paris with his colleague Lewens to seek, as the emissary of the so-called Irish Directory, the assistance of the French in an effort to establish Irish independence. And in the history of intrigue there is perhaps no more extraordinary chapter than that which records the marvellous adroitness and indomitable purpose with which an unknown and friendless Irishman, ignorant of the French language and almost without introductions, made his way into the French Directory, and succeeded in pledging Carnot, the coolest statesman of the Republic, and Hoche, at that time its most distinguished soldier, to embrace the cause of Ireland.

But in 1798 the conditions were less favourable to the Irish cause than when Tone's persuasive audacity had captivated the Organiser of Victory. While the Rebellion was running its brief and sanguinary course, the agents of the United Irishmen had been vainly seeking to induce the Directory to hasten the fulfilment of its pledge to equip a fresh expedition which might have an issue more fortunate

<sup>1</sup> (1) *Hoche en Irlande*. Par G. Escande. Paris, 1888. (2) *La France et l'Irlande pendant la Révolution*. Par E. Guillon. Paris, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> *Projets et Tentatives de Débarquement aux Iles Britanniques*. Par Edouard Desbrière, Capitaine breveté au 1er Cuirassiers. 3 vols. Paris, 1900-1.



than that which, under the direction of Hoche and Grouchy, had been successively befogged, becalmed, and shattered by the elements in Bantry Bay, or that other which, designed in concert with France for the same object, after lying for months wind-bound in the Texel, was annihilated at Camperdown. For the Directory of 1798 was not the Directory of 1796, or even of 1797. The men who had befriended Tone, and by whom the expeditions from Brest and the Texel had been undertaken and captained, were gone. Carnot had been obliged to seek safety in consequence of the *coup d'état* of September 4th, 1797, which changed the composition of the Directory, and which was the first visible sign that a power greater than the power of the Republic had arisen in the person of the commander of the army of Italy. On the 28th of the same month Hoche, the most distinguished general, with the single exception of Buonaparte, whom the wars of the Republic produced, had died at the head of the army of the Rhine. With him died the one steady friend to the Irish cause, the friend whose enthusiasm was such that, as Tone mournfully notes in almost the last page of his journal, written while the Rebellion was in progress, 'he would be in Ireland in a month, if he only went with his Etat-Major in a fishing-boat.'

But above all the influence of Buonaparte had become paramount; and the influence of Buonaparte was unfavourable to Ireland. 'He listened but said very little,' writes Tone after an interview with the Corsican in which Lewens, as Irish Ambassador, had represented the situation of Ireland and the desires of the United Irishmen. After three interviews it remained impossible to augur anything good or bad as to his real intentions. In truth Buonaparte does not seem at this time to have seriously believed in the policy of an invasion either of England or Ireland, though he allowed the preparations to go forward. Already he was looking not to the West but to the East, and dazzled by the golden visions of Egypt and India. On February 23rd, 1798, after some months of seeming indecision, he addressed a letter to the Directory, pointing out that the inefficiency of the French navy must render the

projected invasion inexpedient, and that, since the fleets at Brest and the Texel had failed to slip through the British blockade in the dark nights of winter, it was idle to hope for better fortune during the months of spring or summer. And thereupon he seems to have definitely abandoned all thoughts of an invasion. Ten days later, on March 5th, in another letter Buonaparte formulated his scheme for the capture of Malta and the conquest of Egypt; and on April 12th it was formally announced that it was through India and not through Ireland that the French armada, so laboriously collected at such an enormous cost, was to attack England. The Army of the East was constituted; and on May 20th, the very month for which the rising in Ireland had been arranged, and only three days before it actually broke out, Buonaparte left Paris for the Mediterranean.

With their treasury exhausted and their arsenals depleted by this expedition, designed for England but appropriated to Egypt, it was scarcely possible for the Directory, even had it so desired, to organise assistance for Ireland on a scale commensurate either with the hopes of the Irish leaders or with the actual military requirements of such an enterprise. Yet its members did not wholly repudiate their promises; they professed still to cherish the notion of an invasion, and they still appeared to lend a ready ear to the representations of Lewens and his colleague. It is unfortunate that just at this period we lose the vivid commentary of Tone, who had spent May and June at Rouen and Havre with the so-called army of England, and whose journal ends with his arrival on June 30th in Paris, whither he had moved from Havre to consult with the Minister of Marine. But there is little difficulty in following the course of the negotiations. On the outbreak of the Rebellion Lewens had written to the Directory reminding it that the Irish Committee had raised the standard of rebellion in reliance on the formal promise which he had been instructed to convey to his associates that France would make the independence of Ireland the condition of any peace with England; describing the progress of the insurrection, and the strength

of the English garrison ; and indicating five thousand troops of all arms, with thirty thousand muskets and artillery and munitions of war in proportion, as the force necessary to support the movement. On June 16th a further appeal was made in which the attention of the Directory was called to the success of the Rebellion, then at its height, and a detachment of one thousand men and five thousand muskets was stated to be sufficient to assure the liberty of Ireland. As a result of these demands, and in recognition of their engagement to the United Irishmen, the Directory determined to equip rapidly an expedition designed on the plan of that of 1796. Three squadrons were to be fitted out at Dunkirk, Brest, and Rochefort, the first, directed by General Kilmaine, to convey the munitions of war for the whole army, the second and third, under Admirals Bompard and Savary respectively, to carry the soldiers and to be commanded respectively by Generals Chérin and Humbert. The whole was designed to provide an effective force of eight thousand men. Chérin declined the command of the second force, which was subsequently conferred on General Hardy.

Want of money, a feeble organisation, and possibly a lack of sincerity in their preparations, caused unexpected delay in the equipment of the fleet ; but at length, on July 30th, Bruix, the Minister of Marine, addressed the following despatch to General Hardy, to whom, as the senior of Humbert, the supreme command of the expedition had been provisionally allotted.

The executive Directory is busily engaged in arranging to send help to the Irish who have taken up arms to sever the yoke of British rule. It is for the French Government to second the efforts of a brave people who have too long suffered under oppression. It is the intention of the Directory to send troops, arms, and ammunition to Ireland, by different routes but simultaneously. Twelve small ships are to leave the ports of Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne, carrying artillery, muskets, and powder, and having on board also a few Irishmen who are anxious to rejoin their countrymen. At Rochefort a squadron of three frigates is ready to set sail ; and at Brest the Directory has fitted out

a squadron, composed of one line-of-battle ship and six frigates, commanded by Admiral Bompard, which will carry the staff of the Army of Ireland.

Full of confidence in your valour, your talents, and your enthusiasm for liberty, the Executive Directory, while awaiting the arrival of General Chérin, has charged you with the provisional command of the army of Ireland. Admiral Bompard will receive detailed instructions as to the route he is to follow. He has orders to disembark at Killala, Sligo, or Donegal.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these instructions Hardy was provided with proclamations addressed to the Irish peasantry, probably the same as those which had been provided for Hoche's expedition, and some of which, bearing the signature of Kilmaine, were subsequently distributed pretty generally in Mayo, notwithstanding that Kilmaine himself never set foot in Ireland. Hardy's orders concluded with the following statement of the political objects of the expedition and of the means by which they were to be effected.

It is most important to take every possible means to arouse the public spirit of the country, and particularly to foster sedulously its hatred of the English name. You will neglect no opportunity of making known the crimes which an odious Government has committed or may seek to commit in Ireland. It is needful too that you should maintain the most stringent discipline among your troops, who should serve as a model for the Irish levies, and impress upon your comrades that they should look on the Irish as their brothers, as citizens persecuted by a tyrannical Government, the enemy of every free man, and that, fighting for the same cause, they should be united by the same ties and the same sentiments. The Executive Government, citizen General, is persuaded that you will justify its confidence by your conduct of the important mission with which you are charged. There has never been an expedition whose result might more powerfully affect the political situation in Europe, or could more advantageously assist the Republic. May your success be commensurate with my good wishes in your behalf, and bring to a people too long the victims of despotism the blessings of liberty and equality.

<sup>1</sup> *Projets et Débarquements*, p. 134-5: Bruix to Hardy, 12 thermidor.



Despite this imposing language it is difficult to believe that the Directory was really in earnest. It is certain at least that while they issued orders they withheld the means of complying with them. Neither Hardy nor Humbert was supplied with funds to pay his soldiers, nor, although it was intended that the two fleets should start simultaneously, had any date been fixed for their departure. In these circumstances Hardy remained in the roadstead of Brest patiently awaiting an order from the Treasury (which never came) for 135,000 francs. But his second in command, less patient and more resourceful, was not to be hindered by the parsimony or poverty of his Government. He succeeded in obtaining an advance of 47,000 francs from the paymaster at Rochefort, who was accommodating enough to supply him without awaiting a formal order from the Treasury at Paris; and having thus supplied himself he set sail from Aix on August 6th. The expedition consisted of three frigates, the *Concorde* (44 guns), the *Franchise* (44 guns), and the *Médée* (38 guns). Distributed on board these vessels was an army of one thousand and seventeen men with eighty-two officers. The General himself was on board the *Concorde*.

Humbert was not only, as was shown by his conduct in thus taking the initiative, a man of vigorous and self-reliant will, but a soldier of experience and proved ability. He was indeed a characteristic product of the Revolution, his career being in many respects typical of that of the many soldiers to whom the Revolution and its opportunities brought fame and fortune. If his knapsack did not chance to hold a Marshal's bâton, that was the fault less of his ability or his services than of the chance which, as he approached that summit of a French soldier's ambition, threw him across the path of Buonaparte. The son of a small farmer in Lorraine, Jean Joseph Amable Humbert was born in 1767 at Rouvrey. At the age of seventeen certain youthful indiscretions had obliged him to leave the employment of a cloth-merchant to whom he was apprenticed; and after wandering from one town to another in various capacities, he



had set up as a dealer in rabbit and goat skins, to supply the glove factories of Lyons. At the outbreak of the Revolution he had been the first to join one of the volunteer regiments raised in the Vosges, the command of which he quickly reached through his combination of republican zeal and military efficiency. Thenceforward his progress was rapid. By 1794 he had reached the rank of General of Brigade. He received a command under Hoche in the army which was sent to effect the pacification of La Vendée, and which did so after one of the most sanguinary and merciless campaigns of even that sanguinary era. In Hoche's expedition he had been placed in command of the Legion of France, and, sailing on board the battleship *Les Droits des Hommes*, had distinguished himself by his personal valour in an engagement with two English vessels which intercepted his retreat. So badly did the vessel fare between storm and shell that of fourteen hundred men only four hundred escaped with their lives. Humbert's experience in La Vendée had taught him how formidable a sturdy and disaffected peasantry might make itself to a civil government, and he seems to have believed that nothing but the leadership of a disciplined army was necessary to the success of an insurrectionary movement in Great Britain. Under this persuasion he had in 1797 suggested to Carnot and his colleagues the desirability of organising an expedition to Scotland or Cornwall, which, taking advantage of the disaffection in the English navy, might, he thought, achieve great successes. Thus, when an expedition was decided on by the Directory, Humbert, now that Hoche was no more, seemed marked out for its control. But his fierce and violent passions had earned him many enemies, and in official circles had inspired some distrust; and he was in consequence designated only for the post of second in command. Of his appearance and manners a graphic description has been left us by Bishop Stock, to whose admirable narrative of the invasion constant reference will be made in these pages.

Of good height and shape, in the full vigour of life, prompt to decide, quick in execution, apparently master of

his art, you could not refuse him the praise of a good officer, while his physiognomy forbade you to like him as a man. His eye, which was small and sleepy (the effect probably of much watching), cast a sidelong glance of insidiousness and even of cruelty; it was the eye of a cat, preparing to spring on her prey. His education and manners were indicative of a person sprung from the lowest orders of society, though he knew how (as most of his countrymen can do) to assume, when it was convenient, the deportment of a gentleman. For learning he had scarcely enough to enable him to write his name. His passions were furious, and all his behaviour seemed marked with the characters of roughness and violence. A narrower observation of him however served to discover that much of this roughness was the result of art, being assumed with the object of extorting by terror a ready compliance with his commands.<sup>1</sup>

The army of which this hardy soldier was the leader was of like quality with its general. One half of the troops had served under Buonaparte in the Italian campaign; the remainder were from the army of the Rhine, and had served under Jourdan, Moreau, and Hoche. They were for the most part young men and, except the grenadiers, not of very striking physique; yet men who, from their grim experience of five years' incessant war, might already be counted veterans. At the siege of Metz, in the winter of 1797, they had slept on the ground in holes dug four feet deep through the snow, and throughout the campaign the toil had been so incessant that one of their officers averred that he had not once removed his leathern garments for a whole twelve-month. In this hard school they had been trained to habits of the most perfect discipline, temperance, and simplicity, and had learned to live contentedly on the plainest fare. Of Humbert's officers none had reached, or were destined to reach, remarkable eminence, but all of them were efficient subordinates, and Sarazin, the second in command, a brilliant one. Among them were three or four Irishmen, who included Matthew Tone, brother of the more celebrated Theobald, and Sullivan, nephew of Madgett, Tone's friend at the French Foreign Office, the latter being the only one of the Irish

<sup>1</sup> *Narrative of what passed at Killala*, p. 34.

refugees accompanying the expedition who made good his escape when all was over.

Two other Irishmen, holding command in the French army and attached to Humbert's immediate staff, deserve to be specially noticed. Bartholomew Teeling was the son of a Roman Catholic linen-merchant of Lisburn, near Belfast, who having taken an active part in the proceedings of the Catholic Convention of 1793 had, four years later, been arrested and thrown into prison for treason. Teeling, then a very young man of prepossessing manners and appearance, who had received a good education, had in 1796 proceeded to France as one of the emissaries to solicit French assistance for the United Irish movement. His mission having become known to the authorities at home, he had deemed it unsafe to return, and had then accepted a commission in the French army. He had served in La Vendée under Hoche, where he had become acquainted with Humbert. Had the expedition succeeded in reaching Donegal and pushed forward into Ulster as was intended, Teeling would have been particularly useful to his commander from his knowledge of that province. As it was, though he had no special local knowledge of Mayo, he was active as an interpreter, displayed conspicuous gallantry both at Collooney and Ballinamuck, and, according to the testimony of his chief, was unsparing throughout the campaign in his endeavours to protect the lives and property of Protestants. A witness for the prosecution at the court-martial before which he was tried deposed to his conspicuous humanity, and said that when some rebels at Castlebar had endeavoured to excuse their outrages by saying they had only injured Protestants, Teeling had warmly exclaimed that he knew no distinction between Protestant and Catholic, and would permit none.

Accompanying the expedition in the capacity of interpreter, and as such attached by a special commission to the General's staff, was Henry O'Keon, son of a cowherd of Lord Tyrawly and a native of the district in which the invaders ultimately landed. O'Keon had left Ireland at a very early age with such smattering of education as a hedge school could

afford. Making his way to Nantes he had, after studying divinity there for some years, taken orders as a priest, and in 1789 had already passed some years as a French *curé*. The Revolution had of course stripped him of his preferment; but accommodating himself to circumstances he exchanged his cassock for a sword. Entering the army of the Republic as a private, O'Keon had by 1798 reached the rank of captain. He was a fat, jolly, good-humoured man, with ruddy countenance and thick black eyebrows running into one another. Of indifferent morals and accommodating conscience, he yet displayed, like Teeling, a humane and tolerant disposition, exerting himself on every occasion to restrain the violence of patriotic, and still more of religious fervour against the loyalists, a humanity which stood him in good stead when, taken prisoner by the British troops at the recapture of Killala, he found his assumed French nationality an unavailing plea before the court-martial. The selection of O'Keon as interpreter helps to explain Humbert's choice of Killala as a landing-place, in preference to either Sligo or Donegal. O'Keon was almost ignorant of English, retaining only just enough of the language to make himself intelligible; but his father lived near Ballina, and he was himself well acquainted with the whole district and a proficient in its vernacular. It was therefore natural that Humbert, whose instructions allowed him a latitude of choice, should select as the scene of his first effort a country in which he could rely on the assistance of O'Keon's local knowledge and intimate acquaintance with the dialect and habits of the people.

In other respects, indeed, the county of Mayo was a district little favourable to the success of such an enterprise as that in which Humbert had so readily embarked. The United Irish movement had at first progressed but slowly in the West, and it had given the leaders no little trouble to develope it. Of the four provinces Connaught had, throughout the whole period of the agitation, been the least disturbed and had given the least concern to the Government. The extent to which the progress of the conspiracy was impeded by the jealousy and rivalries of the local Roman Catholic



gentry (some of whom, influenced by the Hon. Denis Browne, brother to Lord Altamont and member for the County, were desirous of acting independently of their brethren in the East of Ireland and of promoting a separate Catholic petition) had obliged Wolfe Tone to undertake in October 1792 what he describes in his journal as a 'peregrination to convert the natives of Connaught, and more especially of Galway and Mayo, to the true political faith.' Tone had then attended meetings in Ballinrobe and Castlebar, but had met with little encouragement, finding the local leaders very suspicious of each other. On the Catholic Committee the western delegates acted uniformly with the more moderate section of that body, and displayed little sympathy with the violent measures recommended by its vehement secretary.

The province seems to have remained outside the United Irish organisation down to 1796, though Defenderism<sup>1</sup> was rife among the peasantry. But by 1797 many recruits had been enrolled among the lower orders, and these were drawn exclusively from the ranks of the Roman Catholics. At the meeting of the Ulster Provincial Committee of the United Irishmen on September 14th, 1797, it was reported that Connaught was in a fair state of organisation. This change in the disposition of the Mayo peasantry, and the exclusively Catholic complexion of the movement which then began to spread, was mainly due to the immigration of some among the Roman Catholic population of Armagh and Tyrone, many of whom had been forced into exile by the outrages of the Peep of Day Boys which followed the defeat of the Defenders at the Battle of the Diamond. As many as four thousand of these people are said to have immigrated to Sligo and Mayo. By the admission even of those who were not likely to exaggerate facts in their favour, they were for the most part decent and industrious, and, from their skill in the linen industry and their general superiority in intelligence to the peasantry of Connaught, their arrival was welcomed by the proprietors. The majority of these immigrants appeared to be free from active disloyalty and readily took

<sup>1</sup> See p. 49 for an account of Defenderism.



the oath of allegiance ; but their presence, and the tales of oppression which they brought with them, naturally inflamed their Roman Catholic neighbours, while those among them who had been actively engaged in Defenderism in their old homes as naturally became centres of sedition in their new surroundings. They brought with them too the habits of organisation with which they had become familiar in Ulster ; and political clubs and meetings soon became numerous in the district. But above all they brought with them a terror of Orangeism, spreading the most extravagant rumours as to the malignant and murderous intentions of the Protestants, who, they averred, had entered into a conspiracy to massacre the entire Roman Catholic population.

So far as regarded Connaught, at any rate, these assertions were without the slightest foundation, and it is certain that down to the actual outbreak of the Rebellion Orangeism itself had gained little if any hold in Mayo. The Bishop of Killala had denounced the institution, and on the very day of the invasion was entering a protest in his primary visitation-charge against the first sentence of the Orange oath, 'I am not a Roman Catholic,' which appeared to him intolerant and unconciliatory. The vehemence of the exiled Catholics, who attributed the persecution they had suffered mainly to Presbyterians, had, however, by a not unnatural process, led to the growth of the institution among the Presbyterian community of Multifarragh, which had been brought from Ulster to Connaught earlier in the century by the Earl of Arran.

Though the statements of the immigrants were accepted and propagated by disaffected priests, it certainly appears that their imputations upon Protestantism, and especially the confusion of the terms Protestant and Orange as though they were synonymous, were due less to the priests than to the refugees themselves, who perhaps were hardly to be blamed for imputing to the Protestants of Mayo the treatment which had been meted out to them by the Protestants of Armagh. It is worth noting that these Ulster Roman Catholics, better educated and with a higher standard of

comfort than the Catholics of the same class in the West, while they were among the most energetic supporters of the French, declined to serve with the Connaught peasantry and insisted on forming a separate corps.

But, these religious disturbances notwithstanding, the general condition of the country continued down to a late period to be, at least to all outward appearance, orderly and loyal. Denis Browne, writing on December 30th, 1796, from Westport, informed the Government that the country was quiet and loyal beyond expectation, and that the immigrant Northerners were quiet and inoffensive. The reports of the Orange terrorism spread by the latter had indeed, according to Browne, produced in some parts of the country a curious and incongruous effect. 'The inhabitants,' he wrote, 'of this part of Mayo have connected the French and the Presbyterians of the North, who, they hear, invited the French over; consequently they have transferred a portion of their hatred to the enemy, who they are persuaded are coming with their northern allies to drive them from their habitations and properties; and so strongly does this operate, that I am persuaded they would beat the French out of this country with stones.'

Another circumstance which continued to sustain the impression that the West remained loyal was the success of the yeomanry movement in Connaught. As many as eight corps of cavalry, and a substantial number of infantry, had been raised. These, no doubt, were recruited mainly from the Protestant farming class, which was then much more numerous in Mayo than it is to-day, but they also contained a far from inconsiderable number of Roman Catholics; and there is no warrant for believing, as alleged by Musgrave, that, down to 1797 at all events, these latter were otherwise than cordial in their allegiance. The general confidence that was felt in the loyalty of the district, in its ability to resist external attack, and in its immunity from internal disturbance, is plainly indicated by the language held as late as January 6th, 1798, by the Protestant clergy whose duty it was to preach at the services held in all the

churches on the occasion of a general thanksgiving for the victories of Cape St. Vincent and Camperdown. On that occasion Dr. Neligan, a well-known clergyman and an active magistrate in the neighbourhood of Ballina, preaching before the Ardnaree Infantry, delivered himself thus : ' It is a pleasing source of consolation that, while some parts of the kingdom are secretly employed in private machinations against the State and in preparing to assist a foreign enemy with the means for our destruction, the inhabitants of this neighbourhood, actuated by the purest motives of patriotism and loyalty, have boldly and openly come forward under the banners of Government and arrayed themselves in arms under respectable leaders determined to support their King, their Constitution, their laws, and their properties against the foreign invaders of their rights and liberties.'

It is evident, however, that the confidence of the Government and its friends in the loyalty of the Mayo peasantry was imprudently exaggerated, and that throughout the early part of 1798 a spirit of active sedition had made itself felt among the people. It is pretty plain, too, that the local leaders had been instructed to expect and prepare for the arrival of the French in their district. Meetings began to be frequent in the neighbourhood of Ballina, and rumours of midnight drilling reached the ears of the authorities. Dr. Neligan, having in the summer procured the arrest of a pedlar named Reynolds, had obtained a confession of a widely extended plot, together with the names of the leading persons immediately concerned. But the country was so denuded of military that it was felt unsafe to attempt any very vigorous measures to explode the conspiracy. A few of the leaders were arrested and sent to Sligo for examination before General Taylor; but they were discharged at the instance of the local magistrate, who seemed satisfied of the groundlessness of the charges. One of the prisoners, however, at once developed into an active insurgent so soon as the Rebellion broke out.

The magistrates were still further thrown off their guard by the eagerness with which the oath of allegiance was

taken ; and so anxious did the people appear to give this guarantee of loyalty that in June a committee was formed by the magistracy under the presidency of the Bishop of Killala for the taking of the oaths by the Roman Catholic priests and their flocks ; and the country being divided into districts, the oath was administered on Sunday after mass in all the parishes, and was taken almost universally. It seems certain, however, that in more than one instance this eagerness of priest and people to testify to their loyalty originated in their anxiety to prevent, by an appearance of devotion to the Constitution, the quartering of any large garrison in their county ; and many of the clergy not only encouraged their flocks to join the insurrection when it broke out, but were active in assisting the invaders. But to this conduct there were some notable exceptions. The elder priests shared as a rule the abhorrence of the French Revolution which characterised their bishops. Father Conway of Ardagh and Father Grady of Rathrea not only exhorted their flocks to continue in their allegiance, but braved the insult and assaults of their parishioners in defence of their principles.

Whilst the organisation of disaffection in Mayo had thus assumed a religious complexion, the fires of religious intolerance were unchecked by the presence of any considerable body of Protestants among either the leaders or the rank and file of the movement. The United Irish organisation, as the testimony of Wolfe Tone proves, proceeded in Connaught almost entirely on a basis of Defenderism, and was thus exclusively Catholic. And whatever might have been the disposition of a few among the local Protestant gentry prior to 1798, the burning of Scullabogue and the massacre on Wexford Bridge effectually deterred any of them from actively embracing the insurgent cause, while they inevitably inflamed the ardour of the Protestant yeomanry and produced a craving for vengeance. So marked was the sectarian character of the disturbance in Connaught that in Mayo only two Protestants joined the movement during the whole progress of the invasion, and these were men of

admittedly bad character who signalised their defection from their loyalty to their sovereign by abjuring their Church. Not only did the Protestant gentry of Connaught hold resolutely aloof from the agitation, but the number of Roman Catholics of position and respectability who came forward was singularly small. Indeed, no feature of the insurrection in Connaught is more remarkable than the distrust of the invasion and its consequences which was shown by the better sort of the Roman Catholics of Mayo, Galway, and Sligo. Of the few who did come forward only two or three were men of any substance or of much personal worth.

Such was the situation and disposition of the province of Connaught, and especially of the county of Mayo which was to be the immediate scene of the invasion, when, on the morning of August 22nd, 1798, Humbert and his fleet, after a voyage of sixteen days, the monotony of which was disagreeably broken by a partial mutiny, occasioned by the clamour of the soldiers to receive their pay, and during which they had been beating almost continually against contrary winds, reached the coast of Ireland. It had been Humbert's design, in accordance with his instructions, to land in Donegal Bay, but the wind being unfavourable and time of importance, he adopted the alternative of Mayo, and the fleet dropped anchor in the bay of Killala.

## II

### KILLALA

On the northern shore of Mayo, but twenty miles from the north-western extremity of Ireland, and pleasantly situated at the head of the wide bay to which it has given its name, lies the little town of Killala. Never an imposing place, it has dwindled within the last century, and more particularly since the Great Famine, to little more than a village. Yet, small and poor as it is to-day, Killala a century ago was a town of some importance, the port for the not inconsiderable grain trade of the neighbouring district, and, from the



circumstance of its being the seat of a bishopric, serving as an outpost of civilisation on the frontiers of the wild West. Few places in that part of Ireland are more rich in traditions and memorials of the past. The conversion of Aladth, or Aulay, the chief of a clan inhabiting part of what is now the barony of Tyrawley, and the founding of a church near the cell to which he retired, are among the best-authenticated traditions of St. Patrick's missionary work; and the Cathedral Church of Killala (*Cill Aladth*) has for thirteen centuries commemorated this conversion of the pagan warrior into the Christian anchorite.

The diocese embraces the wild baronies of Erris and Tyrawley, the former of which still remains perhaps the most primitive district in the three kingdoms. Secure in its wild fastnesses of rock, torrent, and bog, guarded on its outer borders by a stormy and inhospitable coast, and to the south and east by a chain of wild mountains and wilder lakes, it remained almost to our own day remote and unvisited, untravelled and trackless as the wilds of Lyonesse,

a waste land, where no one comes,  
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

The reports of such adventurers as penetrated these solitudes from time to time were not likely to encourage travellers. When Bishop Pococke, in 1752, made his tour through the island, he found Erris but little changed from the days of the first bishop of the Irish Church. A few ruins of ancient fortifications seemed to attest the incursions of Danish invaders, and the remains of a small Protestant colony planted by the Cromwellian owners of the barony, which has since been absorbed in its surroundings, were still to be met with. Arthur Young describes the astonishment with which the people of Erris, in their rare visits to more civilised districts, viewed the unknown marvels of trees and shrubs; and it was not until 1820 that the country was rendered accessible to even a two-wheeled vehicle. Killala, however, situated at the eastern side of the less primitive barony of the two, and the seat since shortly after

the Reformation of the united dioceses of Killala and Achonry, stood on a more fertile spot. Its pleasant fields and pastures had ministered in old days to communities of monks, of whom the abbeys of Moyne and Rosserk are still the venerable memorials. In more modern times they had furnished the endowment of a bishopric which, though one of the poorest in the Irish Church, was still a desirable piece of preferment, forming the first rung in the ladder of episcopal promotion, though its comparatively slender income and remote situation caused the occupants of the see to ascend as rapidly as they could. In the eighteenth century alone there were no fewer than thirteen bishops of Killala, of whom only three died in the see; and an old lady, living in 1805, is said to have been able to count as many as eleven prelates who had ruled the diocese within her memory. Nevertheless the bishops of Killala, despite these rapid translations, did their work, the later prelates at all events, in a manner which compares favourably with the record of many of their richer brethren of the Irish Establishment in the eighteenth century; and they have left pleasant memories behind them. They resided in the town to which their presence lent importance and their incomes prosperity. After the amalgamation of the see in 1834 with the Archdiocese of Tuam it became a saying among the inhabitants of the decaying town, where the old palace is now the workhouse, that 'the luck went out of Killala with the bishops.'

In August 1798 Killala Castle, the see-house of the diocese, was tenanted by the penultimate Bishop of Killala, Dr. Joseph Stock, to whose presence in the town at the period of the invasion we are indebted for the fullest, most interesting, and most authentic description of the character of the French army and of the episodes which marked its occupation of Killala and the adjacent country. Dr. Stock was a man not only of learning and piety, but, as his narrative shows, of tolerant and humane disposition, as well as of shrewd observation. Unlike the majority of his contemporaries on the Irish episcopal bench, he had

been born, bred, and educated in Ireland, and his preferment had been earned by solid performances. Far from ranking among Swift's 'highwaymen bishops,' he belonged rather to the type of 'Greek play bishops,' so common in the Anglican Church in the early part of the nineteenth century. The son of a hosier in Dublin, whose family had been settled in the Irish metropolis for more than one generation, Stock had achieved a distinguished career in Trinity College, Dublin, of which he became a Fellow. While in residence at the University he produced editions of the classics which long remained in vogue; and having retired upon a college living he became head-master of Enniskillen, then, as now, one of the most important schools in Ireland. Even these distinctions, however, might have failed to win him a bishopric had he remained without advantageous family connections; but a wife who bore him eleven children brought him also the means of supporting them. This lady was a sister-in-law of Archbishop Newcome, and during Dr. Newcome's brief tenure of the Irish Primacy, Stock was appointed to the see of Killala. Unlike some of his episcopal brethren before and since, the Bishop's activity of mind was not exhausted by his promotion. He only exchanged the literary labours of a schoolmaster for those appropriate to a divine, and while awaiting his own translation to some richer see he occupied his leisure with a metrical translation of Job. It was as well perhaps that he should thus have preached to himself the virtue of patience, for he had to wait twelve years for his advancement to Waterford. Lord Holland, in his 'Memoirs of the Whig Party,' ascribes this delay in recognising the Bishop's undoubted merit to the dissatisfaction which his kindly testimony to the moderation and humanity of the French troops inspired in official circles at the time when Nelson's advice to his midshipmen to 'hate the Frenchman as you do the devil' conveyed the popular view of our enemies.

On the morning of August 22, Dr. Stock and his guests at Killala Castle, where several of the clergy of the diocese were assembled for the Bishop's primary visitation, intended

to be held on the day following, descried three large vessels in the bay carrying English colours. Eager to see a British man-of-war, the Bishop's sons, Edwin and Arthur Stock, lads of nineteen and sixteen, threw themselves into a fishing-boat along with the port-surveyor, and pulling to the largest of the ships speedily found themselves prisoners on board the French frigate *Concorde*. The fleet was in the act of anchoring and the army preparing to disembark. The elder of the brothers, happening to be a proficient in the French language, was quickly brought ashore to act as an interpreter to the invaders, who at three o'clock received orders to disembark, an operation which was completed before nightfall. Sarazin, the Adjutant-General, with the grenadiers, was the first to reach the shore, and was at once sent forward to attack Killala. The rest of the troops quickly followed; and, leaving only a small force at Kilcummin to land the stores from the ships, and to distribute among the peasants, who flocked to the shore, a supply of arms and uniforms for such as might be found willing to join the army of Ireland, Humbert hurried to the support of his subordinate. Marching by Palmerston, some three miles from Killala, and crossing a considerable stream, the Owenmore, at that place, they advanced quickly towards Killala in the dusk of a fine August evening.

The Bishop of Killala, with the Dean and others of his clergy, and a couple of officers belonging to the regiment of Carabiniers quartered at Ballina, were just rising to join the ladies after dinner, when a mounted messenger dashed breathlessly up to the castle gates with the alarming intelligence that the French were upon them. Captain Kirkwood of the local yeomanry, the Tyrawley Cavalry, had been apprised a little earlier by a fisherman of the enemy's landing; and aided by a small party of regulars belonging to the Prince of Wales's Fencibles, a regiment lately stationed in the district, he hastily took up a position, with not more than fifty men, at the top of the street leading to the castle. From the centre of Killala, near what is called the Steeple Hill, on which stands a very perfect example of

the ancient Round Towers of Ireland, three roads diverge to the south, west, and north-east. The last of these wound by the cathedral and the churchyard wall past the castle towards Ballina; by the second the French advanced.

On reaching the outskirts of the town, Humbert detached a party across the meadows under the guidance of an Irish recruit named Kerrigan, who was subsequently given a commission in the Irish army, to occupy the southern road, and then ordered Sarazin to charge with his grenadiers. The position taken up by Kirkwood was a strong one, but the yeomanry, unaccustomed to actual fighting, were unable to withstand the onset of the French bayonets. After firing a volley which wounded some of the enemy, but failed to check their progress, they fled precipitately down the road towards Ballina, leaving their commander, with Lieutenant Sills of the Fencibles, and Dr. Ellison the Rector of Castlebar, a *ci-devant* cavalry officer of the British army, to make with a few others a brief and ineffectual resistance. These officers were quickly forced back to the castle gates, where they were obliged to surrender themselves prisoners. Thus, after little more than a few minutes' skirmishing, Killala, with its castle and bishop, was in the hands of the enemy. There was no loss of life on the French side, but of the yeomanry two were killed—one of them, the elderly and gouty apothecary of the town, receiving a bullet in his head as he attempted to gain the shelter of his own house. Among the wounded were the valiant Dr. Ellison, slightly injured by a shot in the heel, and two French officers. Twenty-three yeomen (including two officers) were taken prisoners and ordered into confinement in the castle, which was at once occupied, but the Fencibles, with the exception of Lieutenant Sills, their commander, made good their retreat to Ballina, some seven miles distant. Most of the clergy assembled for the visitation had meantime escaped as best they could, some of them only doing so with very considerable difficulty. Charles Seymour, afterwards the well-known Protestant evangelist of Connemara, has told how, finding himself in the midst of the French troops in the streets



of Killala, and knowing not how otherwise to avoid being taken prisoner, he made the best use of the one word of French he was acquainted with by shouting *Français, Français*, as he waved his arms with pretended enthusiasm.

The fighting over, General Humbert, accompanied by Edwin Stock, quickly appeared at the castle gates. The French commander had taken no active part in the struggle in the town, but arriving immediately after, he, with somewhat magnificent exaggeration of the achievement of his lieutenant, promoted Sarazin to be a General of Brigade upon the spot. This done he demanded to see M. l'Évêque. The Bishop had been urged to fly in the company of some Carbineer officers, who, on hearing the news of the French advance, had ridden back to their quarters at full speed ; but he had determined, wisely as the event proved, to stand his ground. He had quietly awaited in his garden the issue of the French attack, and promptly appearing in response to Humbert's summons he soon, as he puts it in his narrative, 'found full employment as an interpreter, and still more as a contributor to the wants of a brave nation.' A green flag, bearing the motto *Erin go bragh*, was hoisted over the castle, which was speedily inundated by the invaders. In a few minutes the dining-room, so lately the scene of the Bishop's hospitality, was filled with French officers and their baggage, with the wounded and their surgical assistants, and with the prisoners who were ordered in for immediate examination. But, despite the confusion and disorder inevitable in such circumstances, the utmost consideration was shown to Dr. Stock. The French took possession of the ground floor, court-yard, and offices ; but the Bishop and his family, with the Dean and his wife, and Dr. Ellison, were allowed to occupy unmolested the upper portion of the house, including the library.

The courtesy thus exhibited, from which, throughout the four weeks of the French occupation of the castle, there was scarcely a moment's departure, was doubtless dictated in the first instance by the expectation that the Bishop and the Protestant population of Killala generally might be

induced to espouse the French cause. It was also in precise accordance with the instructions conveyed to the French General by the Directory to respect, and cause to be respected, the manners, customs, and religious observances of the Irish people. Humbert appears to have been possessed with the delusion which Wolfe Tone had found so difficult to dissipate in the minds of the Directory, and which had doubtless been fostered in French minds by less clear-sighted and more bombastic intriguers, such as Napper Tandy, that the propertied classes in Ireland would be found willing to join the insurrectionary movement. In pursuance of this idea, while Lieutenant Sills, as an officer of the British army, was ordered aboard the ships as a prisoner, Captain Kirkwood of the yeomanry was at once placed on his *parole*; and the French General, in his first conversation with the Bishop, actually intimated that there was room in the Directory of the Province of Conaught, which it was his intention to establish forthwith, for a person of the ability and consequence of the Bishop of Killala. Humbert evinced evident astonishment at the refusal of this overture, and indeed it was some time before the French officers could be got to understand how widely different was the episcopal standpoint.

Thus, though naturally a good deal perturbed by this martial visitation of his diocese, the Bishop had no reason to be apprehensive for the safety of his own person or that of his family and friends; though for a day or two the conduct of the General, a man of violent and uncertain temper, occasionally inspired alarm. It was at first arranged that the Bishop should accompany the French army, when they should set out for Castlebar, as a hostage for the safety of the garrison left at Killala; but when the time came his son Edwin was accepted in his stead. On the day after the landing, however, he was threatened with a more serious inconvenience. Being unable to comply with a requisition of the General to procure, or cause to be procured, from the country people horses and wagons to draw the artillery and convey the stores, he was ordered on

board ship for deportation to France, and was even given in charge of a corporal's guard for that purpose. The Bishop, however, was not suffered to proceed more than half a mile from the castle ere he was recalled by a messenger on horseback to receive from the General, standing on the staircase, apologies for an indignity which was offered, according to Humbert, only with the object of impressing and terrifying the populace.

Meantime, the disembarkation of the stores and artillery had been quickly completed, and on the morning of the 24th the French ships, their safety menaced by a storm, and anxious doubtless to elude the vigilance of the English squadron which was on the look-out for them, sailed out of the bay, taking with them most of the prisoners captured in the fighting at Killala.

Humbert, thus left to himself with his little army in this remote corner of Ireland, lost no time in taking the offensive. The day after his arrival he despatched General Sarazin with a detachment of a hundred men, including forty troopers, to make a reconnaissance towards Ballina. Finding the opposition likely to be formidable, Sarazin fell back on Killala, taking, however, the precaution of posting a strong ambuscade under an old bridge about two miles out of the latter town. Later in the day the English forces in Ballina, having been reinforced by some yeomanry and by a detachment of the Carbineers under Major Keir, advanced on Killala; but, being vigorously assailed from the ambuscade, they were forced to retire after a brisk skirmish, and not without loss. Mr. Fortescue, a young clergyman who had volunteered his services, was mortally wounded, and died a few days afterwards. The day following Humbert himself, with the main body of his army, marched against Ballina. On this occasion scarcely any attempt was made to oppose Sarazin and his grenadiers, who again led the advance. Some troops had been collected under Colonel Sir Thomas Chapman, who took up a position near Moyne Abbey on the road from Killala; but these quickly retreated, and, scarcely halting in Ballina, evacuated that town and retired to Foxford, eight miles

further south. The execution of a rebel by the retreating English troops enabled the Frenchmen to signalise their entry into Ballina by a characteristic display of theatrical sympathy. A man named Walsh, who with premature and injudicious assiduity was found recruiting for the invaders, had been hanged on a tree in the main street of Ballina. As the French troops advanced Sarazin and many of his followers embraced the still-warm body of the victim, the leader exclaiming as he kissed the face of the corpse : ‘ *Voilà, Messieurs*, thus do we honour the martyrs of your sacred cause.’

Having by these rapid and successful movements, and with the loss so far of only a single soldier, obtained control of a very considerable part of north-west Mayo, and having impressed the populace with a belief alike in the prowess of the French arms and in the weakness of the defence, Humbert’s next care was to attract recruits to his standard, and as the representative of the French Republic to establish a form of civil government. On the morning following his arrival he issued a grandiloquent proclamation, setting forth the sympathy of the French for Ireland, the valour and disinterestedness of the invading army, and the glories attendant on popular liberty. This document, the composition probably of Humbert’s Irish officers, Teeling and O’Keon, ran as follows :

#### LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY, UNION !

Irishmen, you have not forgot Bantry Bay ; you know what efforts France has made to assist you. Her affection for you, her desire to avenge your wrongs and insure your independence, can never be impaired. After several unsuccessful attempts, behold Frenchmen arrived amongst you. They come to support your courage, to share your dangers, to join their arms and to mix their blood with yours in the sacred cause of liberty.

Brave Irishmen, our cause is common : like you we abhor the avaricious and bloodthirsty policy of an oppressive Government ; like you, we hold as indefeasible the rights of all nations to liberty ; like you, we are persuaded that the

peace of the world must ever be troubled, as long as the British Ministry is suffered to make with impunity a traffic of the industry, labour, and blood of the people.

But exclusive of the interests which unite us we have powerful motives to love and defend you. Have we not been the pretext of the cruelty exercised against you by the cabinet of St. James's? The heartfelt interest you have shown in the grand events of our Revolution, has it not been imputed to you as a crime? Are not tortures and death continually hanging over such of you as are barely suspected of being our friends? Let us unite, then, and march to glory.

We swear the most inviolable respect for your properties, your laws, and all your religious opinions. Be free; be masters in your own country! We look for no other conquest than that of your liberty, no other success than yours. The moment of breaking your chains has arrived; our triumphant troops are now flying to the extremities of the earth, to tear up the roots of the wealth and tyranny of our enemies. That frightful Colossus is mouldering away in every part. Can there be any Irishman base enough to separate himself at such a happy juncture from the grand interests of his country? If such there be, brave friends, let him be chased from the country he betrays, and let his property become the reward of those generous men who know how to fight and die.

Irishmen, recollect the late defeats which your enemies have experienced from the French; recollect the plains of Houscoste, Toulon, Quiberon, and Ostend; recollect America, free from the moment she wished to be so. The contest between you and your oppressors cannot be long. Union! Liberty! The Irish Republic! such is our cry. Let us march! Our hearts are devoted to you; our glory is in your happiness. Health and Fraternity!

HUMBERT, General.

To inspire confidence in these promises it was announced that Humbert's was only the vanguard of an army of thirty thousand men who were to arrive within a fortnight; that arms, ammunition, and clothing were ready for distribution among the brave allies of France; and that, pending the arrival of a supply of ready money with the rest of the army of invasion, the necessaries of the soldiers would be purchased



by drafts on the new provincial Directory which it was proposed to establish forthwith. A commissary of stores soon found his whole time occupied in writing out drafts in the following terms: 'In the name of the French Government, good for half a guinea to be raised on the province of Connaught.'

For the arms and uniforms the demand was brisk from the outset. Chests containing each forty muskets, and others filled with gay French uniforms, were opened in the courtyard of the castle, and distributed indiscriminately among the applicants, upwards of five thousand stand of arms being handed out, according to the statement of a French officer. The eagerness of the people for the uniforms, of which as many as a thousand were given out among the people round Killala alone, was so great that some of the peasants, after receiving their suits, presented themselves next day in their native rags for a second supply. The gaudy helmets, elaborately edged with spotted brown paper in imitation of leopard-skin, were special objects of ambition.

It may be doubted, however, whether, with a longer experience of the quality of these raw recruits, so general and extravagant a distribution of arms would have been deemed expedient. Indeed, a little later Humbert gave up the attempt to turn the peasantry into disciplined soldiers, finding them much more efficient when charging with the pikes they understood the use of, than when attempting to fire volleys with weapons which they knew not how to manage. These Irish levies quickly disappointed their French friends. Entirely without military training, scarcely comprehending the necessity of discipline, and uncontrolled by persons of superior education, it was scarcely surprising that they should prove a hindrance rather than a help to their allies. To many of them firearms were so little familiar that they sought to insert their cartridges at the wrong end, and, when the ammunition stuck in the barrel, in their efforts to extract it, often beat and bent the weapon against the ground till it was rendered useless. Those who were more expert were so proud of their accomplishment that they were perpetually

discharging their muskets and wasting their allowance of powder in shooting crows. This practice was peremptorily put a stop to after the French commander had narrowly escaped a bullet fired by one of this awkward squad; and thenceforward the recruits remained unprovided with bullets, and were restricted to one charge of gunpowder.

Even more unfamiliar than musket and cartridge to the untutored peasants of the West was the fare served out to them as rations in common with their French comrades. To the poor cottier from the mountains of Erris meat was an unknown luxury, and from his ignorance how to use or cook it the wastefulness was extreme. A French officer complained that these Irishmen would consume in four days proportionately more than the army of Italy would have consumed in a month; and he told with disgust how he had seen a recruit, on receiving his week's allowance of beef (eight pounds), lie down on the ground and gnaw it with such voracity that he was certain the fellow would devour it all before he rose. Small wonder that, in less than a fortnight from their arrival, the contemptuous estimate of the French for these new allies of the Republic should be thus expressed by an old soldier, on his commanding officer ordering him to set out for Sligo at the head of a detachment of Irish levies: 'Do you know what I would do with these Irish devils, if I had a body to form out of them? I would pick out one third of them, and by the Lord I would shoot the rest!'

Scarcely greater than the dissimilarity in training and discipline between the two wings of the allied forces were the differences of opinion which separated them in religious matters. The simple and untutored peasant of Mayo, with his implicit reverence for the priest, his unquestioning acceptance of the mysteries of his faith, and his belief that he was engaged not less in a holy war than in a patriotic enterprise, was incomprehensible to the free-thinking veterans of the army of Italy, who laughed at the simplicity with which the peasantry took arms, as they expressed it, 'for France and the Blessed Virgin.' 'Why, then, God help these simple-

tons !' exclaimed a Frenchman. 'If they knew how little we care for the Pope or his religion, they would not be so hot in expecting help from us. We have just sent Mr. Pope away from Italy ; and who knows but we may find him again in this country ?' Throughout the campaign the French troops, heedless of their instructions to treat the Irish as fighting for the same cause as themselves, took but little pains to show respect to the religious views of the inhabitants of the country, mocking at them for their observance of the Sabbath and their fasting on Fridays, and deriding as an absurd superstition the practice of wearing scapulars, which had become prevalent among the peasantry of Mayo.

While the peasantry thus came forward with undisciplined enthusiasm, Humbert and his officers looked in vain among the volunteers for representatives of the other orders of society. Neither from among the landed gentry nor from the commercial class did they receive any considerable support. At Killala, as afterwards at Castlebar, the French General found that his enterprise, even when not actively opposed, was viewed with dislike and suspicion as well among the Roman Catholic gentry as among their Protestant brethren. Mr. Richard Bourke of Ballina, and one Matthew Bellew, brother of the Roman Catholic bishop of the diocese, were the only persons of good connections in the immediate neighbourhood of Killala who declared definitely for the invaders ; and neither of these was a very reputable specimen of his class. General Bellew, as he came to be called, was indeed a member of the ancient Roman Catholic family of that name, but he had disgraced his relations by a life of drunkenness and debauchery. Intended for the priesthood by his father, who had sent him to Rome to be educated, he had deserted divinity for a soldier's life. After spending some years in the Austrian, and subsequently in the Russian service, he had been severely wounded by the explosion of a mine at the siege of Ismail, and obliged to abandon his military career. Returning to Mayo as a dependent upon his brother the bishop, he had fallen into drunken and dirty

habits. Being, however, a man of some humour and entertaining social qualities, he continued to be tolerated by the Mayo gentry, and wandered about, at will, a sort of disreputable Will Wimble, from one country house to another. So little of a United Irishman was he, that, on the arrival of the French, he desired to take arms against them and offered to serve with the local yeomanry. This offer being refused he had, unable to keep out of the excitement, joined the French; and was at once placed by Humbert in command of the Irish recruits, a position in which his military experience, joined to his knowledge of French, would have made him exceedingly useful, had he been able to place his intemperate habits under restraint. The example of Bourke and Bellew was followed by James O'Dowd, the last representative of one of the most ancient families of Tyrawley, and by two gentlemen named Barrett, father and son. Of these the elder was a doctor and apothecary in Ballina, and the son had been, prior to the outbreak of the Rebellion, an active member of the Tyrawley Yeomanry Corps, with the reputation of an efficient soldier and a loyal subject. The Barretts were both men of humane and peaceful disposition, and appear rather to have drifted into the treason which cost the father his life and drove the son into exile, than to have acted from any warm enthusiasm for the popular cause.

At the end of three days from his arrival Humbert, having enrolled and officered an Irish contingent of about six hundred men, moved forward with the main body of his troops to Ballina, with the intention of advancing from that point on Castlebar. For the protection of his military stores and ammunition, which included a quantity of gunpowder that ultimately became a source of great embarrassment to the garrison, and perhaps also with a view to the protection of his rear in the event of a landing of troops by the British squadron, which, as he was aware, had been chasing him, a detachment of nearly two hundred French soldiers with six officers was left behind in Killala. As hostages for the safety of these officers Humbert carried with him Edwin

Stock, Mr. Nixon, the curate of Killala, and four other residents of the town. These, however, were permitted to return a day or two later.

### III

#### THE CASTLEBAR RACES

While these events were passing at Killala, the authorities at Dublin Castle were making hurried preparations to resist an attack as to the precise magnitude of which they were necessarily for some time in ignorance. The first rumours of the invasion had reached the Lord-Lieutenant at Dublin on Friday, August 22, through the General commanding the forces in Connaught. To allay as quickly as possible the excitement which, it was anticipated, would follow the announcement that the long-expected invasion was at last an unexpected reality, as well no doubt as to prevent exaggerated reports of the enemy's force from getting abroad, Lord Castlereagh at once addressed a letter to the Lord Mayor of Dublin, in which he conveyed the information that a small French squadron had appeared at Killala and landed a force, the number of which was unknown, and concluded by stating that inasmuch as a squadron of his Majesty's ships, consisting of one line-of-battle ship and five frigates, was cruising off the north-west coast, there was good reason to hope it would fall in with the enemy.

The cheerful optimism of this communication by no means represented the true state of the official mind. The Rebellion in Wexford was much too recent to allow the Viceroy and his advisers to view matters with all the equanimity they felt it politic to profess. Neither the information then in possession of the authorities as to the state of the popular feeling, nor the actual provision for the defence of the country, was sufficiently satisfactory to forbid the most serious anxiety. Lord Cornwallis had but just concluded a redistribution of his military forces, in which he had consulted principally the security of the southern coast, as the quarter from which attack might most naturally



be expected. The province of Connaught had not been altogether neglected in these preparations, but the counties of Mayo and Sligo had been very thinly garrisoned, as having been perhaps the least disturbed of all the Irish counties during the actual progress of the insurrection; and of the regiments intended to be stationed in Connaught several had not yet reached their destination at the moment the invasion occurred. Only the day before the landing, Captain Taylor, the military secretary and aide-de-camp to the Viceroy, had expressed in a letter to Wickham the gravest misgivings in regard both to the efficiency and the loyalty of the Militia regiments, especially those of the northern counties, in which conspiracy and desertion had recently gone to great lengths. In the same communication fears were expressed that the quiescence of the insurgent counties proceeded from necessity only, and that the first prospect of foreign assistance would encourage them to a fresh rising.

Lord Cornwallis, in these circumstances, at once determined to take the field in person; and on August 26, having meantime received despatches giving a fuller account of the movements of the enemy and the condition of the country, he embarked at the Grand Canal Harbour for Tullamore at the head of a thousand men, drafted from the Dublin garrison, with three pieces of artillery. He had, two days previously, on the first receipt of the news of the invasion, sent forward General Lake to Galway, to take command of the troops west of the Shannon. It had been the intention of the Viceroy, mindful of the effect likely to be produced on the country by any mischance, the result of premature action, that no attempt should be made to bring the French army to an engagement until a force should have been concentrated sufficient to insure the complete defeat of the invaders. But the Viceroy was without the means of communicating with his subordinates in the west, pending the assumption of the command by Lake. At the moment of the French landing, the officer in charge of the Connaught district was Major-General Hutchinson (afterwards the

second Lord Donoughmore), a soldier who, though described by Lord Cornwallis after Castlebar as 'no general,' had already attained a reputation for ability; and whose subsequent career in Egypt proved, at all events, that if he did not know his business in 1798 he had at any rate learned it by 1801.

Hutchinson was the second son of the well-known Provost of Trinity College, of whom Lord North, disgusted with his insatiable greed for office, had said that if the King were to give him the three kingdoms on one day he would ask for the Isle of Man the next for a potato garden. He had entered the Irish Parliament at an early age, and at the moment of the invasion still held a seat in that assembly. He had commenced his military career under Abercromby, whom he was subsequently to succeed in Egypt. Though unpopular in the service from his unsociable habits and ungracious manners, he was well fitted by his naturally humane temperament—as well perhaps as by his hereditary connection with the popular party in Ireland—for the divisional command which had been assigned to him; and his views of policy harmonised with the methods relied upon by Cornwallis for the pacification of the country.

Hutchinson, who with General Trench was at Galway on August 22, had received his first intimation of the invasion on the morning after Humbert had landed, in a letter from Sir Thomas Chapman, already mentioned in the affair at Ballina, which, without giving the actual numbers of the French army, stated the strength of the fleet at seven or eight ships. As a fleet of these dimensions might have been sufficient to carry a force numerically formidable, Hutchinson deemed it his duty to await further intelligence before taking the field; but meantime he gave orders to the troops under his command to hold themselves in readiness to move forward on a moment's notice. Early on the morning following, having received from General Taylor, who was stationed at Sligo, more definite information as to the real strength of the invading army, together with a pressing demand for assistance, he determined to move at once

towards Castlebar with the whole force at his disposal, in order to prevent a forward movement on the part of the French. This action of Hutchinson's was certainly premature, for to effect it he was obliged to leave the counties of Leitrim and Roscommon open to the French army, and to suffer the bridges on the upper Shannon to remain entirely without protection. Leaving Galway at 10 A.M. on Friday, he arrived that evening at Castlebar, the country through which he marched being perfectly tranquil. Immediately on his arrival Hutchinson sent forward an officer with a flag of truce to Killala, ostensibly to make inquiries after an officer who, he learned, had been wounded and taken prisoner in the skirmish at Ballina, but really to ascertain the exact strength of the enemy. This emissary, having first privately reassured the captives at Killala with the information that a force equal to three times that of the French would be certain to give a good account of the invaders at Ballina, returned with reports which placed the French force at rather less than their actual numbers; and Hutchinson, supported by General Trench, made his preparations for giving battle. The force which he had brought with him consisted of the Kerry, Kilkenny, and Longford Militias, a detachment of the Fraser Fencibles, and a detachment of Lord Roden's Fencible Dragoons. Of these the Kerrys were sent forward to reinforce General Taylor at Foxford; but a few troops belonging to the 6th Regiment of Foot and the Prince of Wales's Leicester Fencibles were already quartered in the town. Lake, arriving so late as eleven o'clock on Friday night, was only able to take over the command when all arrangements for giving battle had been completed, and could not, even had he desired it, have effected a retreat in time to avoid an engagement.

It is exceedingly difficult to compute the numerical strength at the disposal of the English Generals at Castlebar; and the greatest discrepancies exist between the various accounts. The British forces have been variously stated at 6,000, the figure given by Humbert in his despatches and adopted by Plowden, and at 1,500, the

number preferred by those who have sought to minimise the disgrace of the defeat inflicted by the French. Both estimates, however, appear to be wide of the truth. Hutchinson, in the exculpatory account of the engagement which he subsequently forwarded to Lord Cornwallis in justification of his decision to give battle to the enemy, relies on his own superiority of strength as removing the imputation of rashness, and puts the troops under his command at some 4,000 ; a figure which precisely accords with the statement of one of Humbert's subordinates, Captain Jobit, who, describing the position in which the French found themselves on reaching Castlebar, says : ' The enemy, according to the unanimous report of all the prisoners, numbered two thousand five hundred infantry, fifteen hundred cavalry, and sixteen guns of varying calibre.'<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Hutchinson, in the very statement just quoted, says : ' The troops were posted on a position previously taken. They were 1,600 or 1,700 cavalry and infantry, ten pieces of cannon, and one howitzer.' Lord Cornwallis, commenting on the latter statement, says : ' You state the force under your command to have amounted to near 4,000 men ; but I have understood that you had not more than 1,000 infantry with you at the time that you exposed yourself to be attacked by the French.' It is obvious that no general writing to his commander-in-chief could be guilty, particularly when endeavouring to exculpate himself, of such gross carelessness as to represent a force of 1,700 as being really 4,000 ; and the explanation doubtless is that the 1,700 mentioned by Hutchinson meant the troops actually at his disposal at Castlebar, while by the 4,000 is to be understood the total number of all arms under the General's command in Connaught. Of this larger number 1,200 were posted near Foxford under General Taylor to resist Humbert's advance, and a considerable force was scattered along the road from Sligo to Boyle.

While Hutchinson had been making his dispositions on

<sup>1</sup> *Projets et Tentatives de Débarquement aux Iles Britanniques, 1793-1805*, ii. p. 102.

the assumption that Humbert must advance on Castlebar by the Foxford road, as the only route possible for an army, the French General was preparing to execute a manœuvre as daring and as unexpected as it proved to be successful. Arriving at Ballina early on the morning of Saturday, September 26, he had quickly informed himself of the nature of the country. There were but two ways of reaching Castlebar, the first and most practicable being by the coach road which proceeds in a south-westerly direction *via* Foxford, crossing the fine river Moy at that town, seven Irish miles from Ballina, and thence leading due west through the comparatively fertile and level baronies of Gallen and Carra. The other road—then little more than a bridle track—leading by the northern shore of the wild waters of Lough Conn to the little town of Crossmolina, bends suddenly southward at that place, and winds by moor and waste and mountain through the wildest part of the barony of Trawley. From Crossmolina to within six miles of Castlebar the road runs between the lake and mountains through the glens of the high range that stretches from south-western Erris across to Sligo, rising in the mountain of Nephin to the height of 2,600 feet, and thence is carried over the summits of a succession of hills to Castlebar. Six miles from that town the road narrows to the rocky and difficult defile called Barnageragh or the Windygap, a pass quite insurmountable in the face of opposition, and capable of being defended against the strongest army with a small force and a couple of pieces of artillery. Learning from Father Conroy, the priest of Addergoole, a parish in the immediate vicinity of Barnageragh, that the mountain road, though difficult, would not be impracticable for his troops, Humbert at once determined to adopt this unusual route. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the 26th he began his march. His whole available army amounted to no more than 700 or 800 of his own men; but he was accompanied by some 600 or 800 of the Irish recruits. The road being impassable for horse artillery, he encumbered himself only with two light curriele guns, to draw which the services of the Irish



levies were utilised. A number of these, much to their dissatisfaction, were actually harnessed to the cannon and obliged to drag the guns over the hills. Marching steadily through the night, and halting for but two hours' bivouac, the entire army passed safely and without opposition through Barnageragh, and had arrived at seven in the morning within two miles of Castlebar. But for the breakdown of one of the guns on the road and a delay of two hours in repairing it, they would have arrived still earlier, and Humbert would have taken the English forces entirely by surprise.

As it was, the British commander was left but little time to prepare for the attack. A messenger had been sent forward from Ballina the evening before to apprise Hutchinson of the route taken by Humbert; but he had been stopped by Father Conroy, sworn a United Irishman, and enrolled in the rebel ranks. The probability of an attack from the Barnageragh side does not seem to have been seriously entertained by Hutchinson, though the possibility of it had occurred to others, and the Government had even been indirectly warned of the danger. A suggestion had been made the day previously to place one or two field pieces with a couple of hundred men at the Gap as a measure of protection; but this was apparently deemed superfluous, Hutchinson being persistent in his belief that the French would march by Foxford. General Taylor, at the latter town, appeared equally satisfied on this point, and even on the 27th, when the non-appearance of the French might have caused him to reconsider his opinion, and when a reconnaissance in the direction of Ballina had revealed no trace of the enemy, he declined to make any movement towards Lough Conn, so as to take the French in the flank should an attack be made from the Barnageragh direction. So convinced were the English commanders of the correctness of their forecast of the strategy likely to be adopted by the French, that even the intelligence brought in at 3 A.M. by a yeoman who had been visiting his farm at Barnageragh, that he had seen a body of men advancing in blue

uniforms, was not at first credited. At length, however, General Trench, with a couple of hundred horse, went forward to reconnoitre. Being immediately fired on by the French within three miles of Castlebar, he quickly returned and ordered the garrison, who had received instructions to be at arms two hours before daybreak, to occupy a position which had been selected on the previous day.

Castlebar, which was thus to become, not for the first time, the scene of a battle,<sup>1</sup> is an irregularly built town, consisting of one principal street more than half a mile in length, running north and south, with others branching from it. A small river flows through the town, which is situated at the north-west angle of the plains of Connaught, and just below the broken country which borders on the highlands of Erris and Tyrawley. Low hills rise on each side of it, rendering it easy of defence. The ground taken up was very strong by nature, on an eminence called Sion Hill, about half a mile distant from the north-west extremity of the town, running from east to west, and commanding a rising ground opposite to it and about a thousand yards distant, over which the French must necessarily pass. The English infantry were posted in three irregular lines, the first consisting of the Kilkenny Militia, with a company of the 6th Foot, and a detachment of the Prince of Wales's Fencibles. The second was formed of the gallant Frazer Fencibles, with two battalion guns and a corps of the Galway Yeomanry. In the rear, in a valley between the north and north-west end of the town, and to the left of the Kilkenny Militia, were stationed four companies of the Longford Militia; while behind the front lines were the cavalry, which included the 1st Fencibles (Lord Roden's Foxhunters), some squadrons of the 6th Carbineers, and some yeomanry. On the northern end of the hill, and on each side of the road by which the French must approach, Captain Shortall was stationed in front of the first line with

<sup>1</sup> Its castle had been besieged and taken in the wars of the seventeenth century, by the leaders of the Confederated Irish, when Sir Henry Bingham, the Governor, was killed.

two curriele guns, two battalion guns attached to the Kilkenny Militia being on his left. Besides this, two curriele guns were posted in the town itself—one on the market place and a second at the northern bridge under Lieutenant Blundell of the Artillery.

Arriving on the heights north of Castlebar at six o'clock, after a fatiguing march of fifteen hours, Humbert reconnoitred his antagonists posted in the manner described, in a position which he considered very strong. He nevertheless resolved on an immediate attack, and at eight o'clock ordered General Sarazin to open the action with his grenadiers. As these troops gained the crest of the rising ground in front of the English position a heavy fire from Shortall's artillery greeted the head of the column, composed of a number of Irish recruits under General Blake. But these Irishmen, as described in Humbert's despatch, were at once driven off, and were of no further use in the engagement. Undeterred by a misfortune for which, as his leader wrote, he was not wholly unprepared, Sarazin and the French grenadiers, supported by their line infantry, continued to push forward, still assailed by a heavy fire, which dismounted one of the French guns and obliged part of the column to retire—though a part of it, rushing forward, gained the shelter of a house fifty yards in front. The main body then reformed in very orderly fashion, still under the fire of the English artillery, and advanced a third time to the attack. Finding it impossible to advance in column formation, Humbert now commenced deploying rapidly from his centre, with open files, until he formed line, mostly in rank entire, nearly parallel with that which occupied the front of the English position. In this order his troops advanced steadily to the point at which they had previously been forced to retire. Up to this the battle had gone entirely in favour of the English troops, who had suffered comparatively little loss, while the French had smarted severely under the accurate fire of Shortall's well-served guns. At this moment, however, an error was committed of which Humbert was quick to take advantage. As the

French lines moved forward, but before they came within range of the English infantry, the latter opened a premature fire, which was entirely futile. Perceiving the mistake, the French rushed forward and gained the shelter of some hedges, under cover of which they pushed forward in irregular parties, extending their wing, with the intention of making a flank movement. The fire of the artillery, though well sustained, was this time less effectual; and, aided by the thick cover of furze and hedge, the French were able to advance to close quarters and charge the British line. As they did so, the infantry, composed mainly of the Longford Militia, without waiting to receive the onset, broke in the utmost disorder and fled panic-stricken towards the town. Sarazin, hurrying forward with his grenadiers, quickly carried the English guns, Shortall, who was left unsupported, with difficulty escaping. At the same time Ardouin, another of Humbert's subordinates, attacked on the left, where he was sturdily resisted by the Frazer Highlanders; but these were unable to hold their ground after the defeat of their comrades, and were forced to retire on Castlebar.

Had there been among the scattered militia the semblance of discipline, gallantry, or pluck, they might easily have been rallied in the rear of the guns stationed in the town (where a party of officers and a few of the Frazers and Kilkenny Fencibles were making a spirited defence on the bridge), and the issue of the encounter entirely reversed. Many of the French officers stated subsequently that they had never seen guns better served or more destructive than those of the British artillery, and that the action would have terminated in favour of the English if the infantry had stood their ground for ten minutes longer. The retreating militia, however, had not the slightest notion of making any further resistance, and though their officers did their utmost to rally them they fled headlong through the town, flinging away their arms and accoutrements as they ran, the better to make their escape. The little party on the bridge were ultimately driven off, though not till after more than half their number had been killed by a charge



of the French hussars, while one of their guns being captured was turned by the enemy on the remainder. Lieut. Blundell, with the second gun, had been unable to effect anything in the market-place, and with the capture of the bridge the defence of the town was over. The retreating troops, stricken with fear, continued to fly as fast as they could to Tuam, twenty-seven miles from Castlebar, whence after a brief rest they made their way to Athlone, some of the Carbineers actually accomplishing this march of sixty-three miles in twenty-seven hours. So rapid and so general indeed was this retreat that the slaughter was comparatively slight, the loss being officially computed after the battle at fifty-two killed, twenty-nine wounded, and two hundred and fifty-one missing. In the last-named category are to be included nearly two hundred privates of the Longford and Kilkenny Militias, who deserted *en masse* to the enemy. On the other hand, Humbert, in his despatch to the Directory announcing his victory, places the English loss at eighteen hundred men, of whom six hundred were killed or wounded, and twelve hundred prisoners. He also claimed to have taken ten pieces of cannon, five standards, and twelve hundred muskets; and a trustworthy English account puts the loss in artillery as nine guns.

The disasters and dishonours of this day were, however, not unmarked by acts of individual gallantry. Captain Chambers, one of the party on the bridge, stuck to his post till the moment before it was carried, and with his musket fired five successive shots, bringing down a Frenchman with each, till at length he fell desperately wounded with a bayonet through his neck. Lord Roden's 'Foxhunters' were an exception to the general worthlessness of the Irish militia regiments: they behaved with great gallantry, protecting the retreat of the infantry, and even recovering a six-pounder which the French had pushed forward through Castlebar. A party of them, as they were retreating out of the town, turned on a body of chasseurs who were pursuing them, and killed five of them on a spot which has since been known from the occurrence as French Hill. But it was reserved for



one of the gallant Highlanders, the Frazers, to vindicate the honour of his country and of the British arms by the one heroic action of that inglorious day. The Frazers were the last to quit the town; and even after the main street had been carried by the French, maintained a vigorous fire from the churchyard. The gaol was guarded by a solitary Frazer sentinel, who had refused to retire with his comrades, and who, when the French advanced, maintained himself for some minutes at the top of a flight of steps, killing no fewer than five Frenchmen before he was hurled from his post and his brains knocked out. A tablet on the wall of the church still records the valour of the Frazers on that unlucky 27th of August.

So ended what have ever since been called, from the rapidity with which the bulk of Hutchinson's army executed their *sauve-qui-peut*, the Races of Castlebar. The annals of civilised warfare scarcely present an instance of a more ignominious rout of a large and well-equipped force by a smaller and less formidable army. Even adopting the lowest estimate of his forces, the British commander enjoyed a substantial preponderance over his opponents in the numbers of his men and in the strength of his artillery, while the natural strength of the position attacked was unquestionably great. Assuming the town to be defended by trained and disciplined troops, commanded by generals of capacity, Humbert's conduct was daring, even to rashness. Indeed, according to the testimony of Hutchinson himself, the attack was certainly one of the most hazardous and desperate ever thought of against a very superior body of troops, as the retreat of the French towards both Killala and Ballina was cut off by Sir Thomas Chapman and General Taylor. The conduct of General Hutchinson in so disposing his forces as to render an engagement inevitable was the subject of a reprimand by Lord Cornwallis after Ballinamuck, and no doubt it would have been more prudent, if it was not absolutely his duty, to await instructions from his Commander-in-Chief before proceeding to Castlebar. But of the legitimacy of

his belief in the ability of his army to inflict a severe defeat on the French, so far as such a success depended on the relative military strength of the opposing forces, there can scarcely be any question. Neither Hutchinson, who planned the action, nor Lake, who only succeeded to his command within a few hours of an action which was inevitable before his arrival, can properly be blamed, at least in their purely military capacity, for a catastrophe that was due much more to political than to tactical causes. Hutchinson's refusal to consider the possibility of an attack from the Barnageragh side was indeed a serious strategical error, and his failure to maintain any effective connection between the troops immediately under his command and those at Foxford was a grave and indeed inexcusable blunder. But Hutchinson's worst mistake lay not so much in the character of his dispositions, as in his failure to take note of the state of feeling among the troops he commanded and of the serious danger of disaffection. He forgot not only that his force was largely composed of Irish militia and of yeomanry regiments not used to service in the field, but, what was a still more formidable source of weakness, that the Longford Militia was recruited from one of the most disaffected counties in Ireland. Though there is no direct evidence that these troops had been tampered with, or that, as has been suggested, it was in reliance on their disaffection that Humbert ventured an otherwise hopeless attack, it is unquestionable that the troops whose conduct caused the rout were the troops from the disaffected counties, the rest of Hutchinson's force, militia and yeomanry as well as regulars, fighting till the day was lost with valour, determination, and loyalty. That this view of the case is the true one is shown by the behaviour of Cornwallis, who, after reprimanding Hutchinson, refused to accept the resignation tendered by that officer, affirming that his conduct in the action had done him the greatest credit, and that he had been guilty of nothing worse than an error of judgment in undertaking a critical engagement with untried troops. Lake's testimony was to the same effect. 'I have reason,' he wrote to the Viceroy the day after the battle, 'to

apprehend the people of the country are flocking to the French army very fast, which will not be prevented unless they are beat shortly, which I should think might easily be done with any troops but those I have to deal with.'

#### IV

##### AFTER CASTLEBAR

Thus far Humbert's adventurous campaign had been extremely successful. Within five days from his landing he had taken three considerable towns, had completely scattered a formidable British army, and had made himself master of one of the largest counties in Ireland. As he wrote from Castlebar to the Directory, he was in possession of Killala, Ballina, Foxford, Castlebar, Newport, Ballinrobe, and Westport. What was even more important, he had inspired in the peasantry of Mayo a belief in the invincibility of his arms, and might reasonably expect to be quickly at the head of a formidable force, which, acting in a country hostile to the British Government, might have achieved successes still more substantial. He at once wrote despatches to the Directory and to the Minister of Marine, announcing the successes he had achieved, expressing an expectation that within three days he would have with him a large reinforcement of Irish who had hitherto hung back and thus retarded his progress, and indicating his intention, 'as soon as the English army shall have evacuated the province of Connaught,' of passing the Shannon and endeavouring to effect a junction with the insurgents of Ulster. 'When this shall be effected,' he added, 'I shall be in sufficient force to march to Dublin and fight a decisive action.' He concluded by an urgent request for reinforcements, the precise composition of which he specified in detail, and with a confident prediction that 'in the course of a month after the arrival of these reinforcements, which I estimate at 2,000 men, Ireland will be free.'

It is not a little remarkable that in this sketch of his

plans and requisitions of reinforcements, Humbert says nothing whatever about the army at Brest with which it was originally intended he should co-operate, and which in the instructions given to Admiral Savary at his departure was stated to be on the point of setting sail when he left Rochefort. He does not appear to have had the least expectation of their arrival, or of any other supplementary expedition coming to his assistance or effecting a diversion in any other part of the island. Throughout his despatches there is not a single allusion to the Brest expedition, or to the failure of his Government to support him; though had he really believed that such support was intended it is difficult to suppose that he would not have uttered some sort of protest or complaint at the delay in providing it. He seems on the contrary to have regarded himself as the sole agent of the Republic in its Irish enterprise, and to have had little confidence in the reality of the preparations of his Government.

But whatever his private expectations of the probable fate of his expedition, Humbert allowed no symptoms of them to escape him. He at once set about the very necessary task of establishing order in the town and making some efforts towards creating discipline among the Irish levies who now crowded to his standard. At Castlebar his earliest recruits had been driven off at the first cannon shot that was fired; but they had been busily engaged during and after the battle in more congenial employment. In a certain sense General Sarazin had not exaggerated when he wrote that Irish liberty was established, and the peasantry quickly proceeded to enjoy that liberty in the manner they best understood by plundering the houses of the neighbouring gentry, indulging in the most reckless waste of provisions, and holding high revelry in the camp, which soon became a sort of gipsies' paradise to which every kind of booty was carried, and in which the fleshpots were continuously replenished with an inexhaustible supply of stolen provisions. Multitudes flocked from all parts of the country-side, carrying flags and shouting 'Erin go bragh.'

A tree of liberty and a harp without a crown were borne through the streets of Castlebar, and droves of sheep, cows, and horses were driven into the town every day. The mansion of Lord Lucan, the principal landowner in the neighbourhood, and a nobleman who had done much to improve the town, was completely gutted, and even the residences of friends of the Catholic cause did not escape, Lord Altamont's being one of the worst treated. Those of Dr. Ellison, the energetic Protestant Rector, and of Mr. Denis Browne, the member for the county, naturally fared still worse. So little method was there in the looting, and so much did the mere exuberance of unfettered licence prevail over the promptings of self-interest, which might have restrained a less primitive people in similar circumstances, that the rich furniture taken from these houses was often broken up to furnish fuel for the boiling of their pots. For a few hours of glorious liberty, the insurgent could enjoy the delights of lighting his pipe with engravings from the picture gallery, or replenish his camp fire with furniture from the drawing-room, of Castlebar House. The appearance of the plunderers in the camp exhibited the most ludicrous absurdities of costume, some going about clad in two silk waistcoats of different colours, others in fine nankeen trousers, but without shoes, and others again drawing attention to their ragged and unwashed exterior by the powerful contrast of richly coloured scarves. One of the more provident of the plunderers, having chanced to obtain a small clock of foreign workmanship, was carrying it off in triumph on her back to her mountain home, when she was suddenly startled by the, to her, unknown sound of its chime as it struck the hour. Terrified by this uncanny sound, she incontinently dropped it in the bog and took to her heels.

Nor was the destructive spirit of the populace exhibited merely in acts of plunder. It was soon further inflamed by the spirit of religious intolerance. A massacre of Protestants was debated, but prevented by the exertions of Teeling and O'Keon. A good deal of damage was done to the Protestant



church, where the large Bible was destroyed ; but an attempt by Father Egan, the parish priest of Castlebar, to appropriate it for high mass was prevented by the decision of Dr. Ellison, who had arrived from Killala with Toussaint two days after the battle, and who was subsequently treated with courtesy by the French General during his stay in the town. The demeanour and actions of the people were entirely opposed to the spirit both of Humbert's instructions, already quoted, and to the General's own sense of order and discipline. Aided by his aide-de-camp Teeling, under the *nom de guerre* of Biron, by Father Michael Gannon, a local priest who had passed several years in France, and by some of the better class of Roman Catholic merchants in the town, he quickly took measures for the restoration of order.

His first step was the formal establishment of a civil administration for the Province of Connaught. A provisional Government was constituted by a proclamation at Castlebar under the presidency of John Moore, son of a country gentleman in the neighbourhood, who had formerly been a merchant at Malaga, and had acquired an estate of 2,000*l.* a year. The President was assisted by a council of twelve members nominated by Humbert. A proclamation commended to the new Government, as its first duty, the organisation of the militia and of the commissariat of the French and Irish armies ; declared all those to be rebels and traitors who, having received arms and clothing, did not at once rejoin the army ; and required every male between the ages of sixteen and forty to repair to the French camp, 'in order to march in mass against the common enemy, the tyrant of Ireland—the English ; whose destruction alone can ensure the independence and welfare of ancient Hibernia.' To provide for this machinery, Humbert further proposed to levy a tax of two thousand guineas on the town ; but this does not appear to have been enforced, and it is asserted that it was remitted through the influence of Dr. Ellison, who represented that such taxation would alienate the goodwill of the townsfolk. The next few days were busily occupied by Humbert and his officers in efforts to reduce to something

like discipline the recruits who had crowded to his standard. They were not quite so numerous as he had estimated, but they were not inconsiderable. He was assisted in these exertions by some of the Roman Catholic gentry. Here, however, as at Killala, it was remarked how few of the better sort were induced to throw in their lot openly with the French. Besides young Moore, the President, not more than two or three of the sons of Roman Catholic landowners joined the ranks at the head of the peasantry of their district. Of those who came forward the most considerable was Colonel Macdonell, a native of Castlebar, who having been started in mercantile life by his father, a gentleman of good property near that town, had deserted commerce for the bar, being among the first of his creed to take advantage of the removal of the disability which down to 1793 had excluded Roman Catholics from the legal profession. As a student in London he had dabbled in revolutionary politics, and, returning to Ireland, had been elected delegate for the county Mayo to the Back Lane Parliament. Between the period of that convention and the breaking out of the Rebellion he had been active in propagating United Irish principles, and, joining the French immediately before the battle at Castlebar with a very considerable number of adherents, he was welcomed by Humbert as a man of influence and at once appointed a colonel.

This gentleman and a Mr. Blake of Galway (who was taken and hanged at Ballinamuck) were, with Father Gannon, Teeling, and O'Keon, Humbert's principal agents in the difficult task of drilling the Irish recruits, a task which was not rendered easier by the impatience with which their efforts at instruction were received. The Connaught peasantry were willing enough to take the uniforms and arms which were distributed; but, as Humbert's proclamation shows, they were not equally ready to respond to the commands of their officers and submit to the coercion of discipline. Untrained and unused to military exercises, they were found unfit to be trusted with the more responsible duties of garrison troops, and the work of sappers to which

they were set they deemed beneath their dignity, the more so as among the French officers over them were some men of colour from St. Domingo, to whom they thought it insulting to be subjected. In addition, they resented being obliged to surrender their loot and bidden to refrain from further plunder. Two of the Irish captains refusing to obey this part of the regulations were promptly shot for mutiny by the French. The recruits complained that the French were better clothed, better lodged, and better fed than they were; and they were also irritated at the restraint put upon their religious fervour by their free-thinking allies. The French, on the other hand, soon began to despise and mistrust recruits with whom they had so little in common, and who were so little of soldiers that they preferred the pike and the pitchfork to the muskets which were distributed to them from the French stores. Teeling himself, in the interval between his capture and execution, sorrowfully admitted the disappointment of the hopes which had been built on the co-operation of the peasantry. 'The country people,' he told Cooke at Dublin, 'were very ill-behaved; came in, got arms and clothes, and ran away; their sole object seemed plunder.'

Miss Edgeworth has left in her memoir of her father a striking but unpleasant description derived from the accounts given her by the French officers, after their final defeat, of the disgust which Humbert's troops expressed for their allies of the Irish republic, which, making every allowance for the excusable chagrin of defeated troops, is little creditable either to the patriotism or the valour of the peasantry: 'The French generals declared that they had been completely deceived as to the state of Ireland. They had expected to find the people in open rebellion, or at least, in their own phrase, organised for exertion; but to their dismay they found only ragamuffins, as they called them, who in joining their standard did them infinitely more harm than good. The generals described the stratagems which had been practised on them by their good allies, the same rebels frequently returning with different tones and new stories,

to obtain double and treble provisions of arms and ammunition and uniforms—selling the ammunition for whisky, and running away at the first fire in the day of battle. The French, detesting and despising those by whom they had been thus cheated, pillaged, and deserted, called them beggars, rascals, and savages. They cursed also without scruple their own Directory for sending them, after they had, as they boasted, conquered the world, to be at last beaten in an Irish bog. Officers and soldiers joined in swearing that they would never return to a country where they could find neither bread, wine, nor discipline, and where the people lived on roots, whisky, and lying.’

While the relations between the allied forces of the French and Irish were thus unsatisfactory, the demeanour of the visitors towards their captives in Castlebar was not less considerate and conciliatory than that exhibited towards the Protestants at Killala. The French did their utmost to protect the property of the townspeople, and set their faces steadfastly against every attempt to gratify religious intolerance. Freedom to exercise their own worship was permitted to the Protestant loyalists, though Humbert was not able to prevent the violation of the church, involving some injury to the pews and communion table, and the destruction of the font. Dr. Ellison was treated with the utmost respect, and even consulted by Humbert. On one occasion, while conversing with Humbert and his staff, a local priest entered the room to ask permission of the General to celebrate mass in the Protestant church. Humbert carelessly replied that he might say mass wherever he pleased, so long as he did not ask him to attend it himself. Whereupon Ellison interposed; and on the priest, in reply to a question, stating he intended to take advantage of this permission, Ellison replied, with the silent acquiescence of Humbert, ‘Well, I cannot prevent it; but if you offer this insult to my church I will have you hanged on the steeple within a fortnight.’ To the townsfolk generally, irrespective of their religious opinions, the French commended themselves by their gaiety, vivacity, and hospitality. They fully sustained their



national reputation for gallantry, and on the very day after the battle—which was fought early in the morning—the officers announced a ball and supper for the same evening.

While Humbert and his troops were thus occupied, the defeated army under Lake had executed a retreat upon Tuam as disorderly as it was rapid, committing revolting depredations on the road, and stimulating by their conduct whatever of discontent and disaffection existed in the country. This misconduct was by no means confined to the Irish militia regiments, the behaviour of the Frazers and Carbineers being equally discreditable. To such an extent did the army practise the worst forms of military licence that Lord Cornwallis, the moment he had arrived in the district and established communications with Lake and Hutchinson, was obliged to issue a general order calling on his subordinates ‘to assist him in putting a stop to the licentious conduct of the troops, and in saving the wretched inhabitants from being robbed and in the most shocking manner ill-treated by those to whom they had a right to look for safety and protection.’ It was announced that immediate execution would be the fate of any soldiers caught in the act of plunder, and a provost-marshal was appointed to patrol the camp and follow with a guard in the rear of the army when on the march.

The Viceroy, on his way to the west, had got as far as Kilbeggan, nearly sixty miles from Dublin, when the news of the defeat at Castlebar reached him on the morning of the 28th. He at once proceeded to Athlone, where he was informed on what appeared reliable intelligence, conveyed by officers who had just come from Tuam, that the French had followed the defeated army to the latter town and had occupied it, after driving Lake through it. Further information showed that the defeat at Castlebar was exercising the apprehended result, and that in addition to the county Mayo the country to the north towards Sligo, including the whole of Roscommon, where the smiths in the forges were busy making pikes, was in a state of insurrection. Though this intelligence proved to be grossly exaggerated, the



Viceroy felt constrained to act with extreme caution, and determined to await reinforcements from Longford and Kilkenny before making any further advance. Lake had meantime established himself at Tuam, where he had been strengthened by the arrival of two Highland regiments on the 29th, and by the Louth militia. A flag of truce had arrived at Tuam with twelve of the captured officers, from whom Lake had ascertained the actual state of affairs at Castlebar, information which he at once sent forward to his commander-in-chief, adding that for want of artillery and ammunition he might find himself obliged to retreat on Athlone. Cornwallis at once decided to move forward to Lake's support, and directing the latter to meet him at Ballinamore, between Athlone and Tuam, he marched to that point on the 30th. Here he remained a day, sending forward Colonel Crauford, with a strong force of cavalry furnished by Lord Roden's Fencibles and the Enniskillen Dragoons, to ascertain the proceedings of the enemy. This officer, pushing forward to Hollymount, a dozen miles beyond Tuam, learned that Ballinrobe in the county Mayo had been occupied by Colonel Blake and a party of Irish, an exploit which formed perhaps the sole independent achievement of Humbert's Irish allies during the campaign. This party was quickly dispersed by Crauford, who continued to advance towards Castlebar without meeting the enemy. On the 1st, the Viceroy proceeded to Knock Hill, and on the 2nd reached Tuam, where he was joined by the Queen's and the 29th, which had marched from Wexford, two old and well-disciplined regiments, by which the effective strength of his army was enormously increased, and by which he would be enabled if necessary to attack Humbert in Castlebar with a certainty of success.

To provide for the contingency, which actually happened, of an attempt by Humbert to push either to Sligo or towards the Shannon, the Viceroy at the same time made arrangements to provide a sufficient force to check any attempt in either of these directions. Brigadier-General Taylor, commanding the Sligo district, who had retired, after Castlebar was

captured, from Foxford to Bellaghy, and ultimately to Boyle, was in command of a force of some 2,500 men, upon which, though numerically strong, Cornwallis did not feel that he could place sufficient reliance, from the circumstance of its being made up of a number of very small detachments, mainly drawn from the Irish militia. To secure the country to the eastward and north, he determined to send Lake forward with large reinforcements sufficient to enable the northern army to act effectively on the enemy's left, and with instructions to follow them pertinaciously, but without bringing the French to an engagement. He proposed himself, should he fail to find the foe in Castlebar, to pass the Shannon at Carrick, with the main army, and move up its eastern bank. Lake accordingly proceeded on the 3rd to Frenchpark, where Taylor was directed to meet him, and the advanced positions of the army were at this side pushed forward to the north-west, towards Bellaghy and Swineford. On the following day the Viceroy moved from Tuam to Hollymount, thirteen miles from Castlebar, being assured that the French still occupied the latter town, and intending to surround it. To protect Sligo, which by this arrangement was thus left exposed, Major-General Nugent was directed to proceed from Enniskillen and make the necessary arrangements for its defence. That officer accordingly sent forward the Limerick City Regiment, three hundred strong, to strengthen and take command of the garrison, hitherto consisting only of Colonel Sparrow and three hundred of the Essex Fencibles. These two regiments, with the Sligo Yeomanry and some other small detachments of infantry, made up a force of 856 efficient men, who had with them six guns, served by a small detachment of artillery. Reaching Hollymount on the 4th, the Viceroy was informed that the enemy were still in Castlebar, which they were endeavouring to strengthen against attack. Not until five o'clock on the evening of the 4th did he learn that on the previous night the French and Irish forces had evacuated the town in two bodies, carrying with them the artillery and ammunition captured a week before from General Lake's army. Humbert

had remained eight days in Castlebar, occupying himself, as has been seen, in the endeavour to make something out of the recruits, and doubtless desiring to maintain his position there as long as possible, to give time for the arrival of the reinforcements he had requisitioned from France.

It is difficult to imagine a more anxious, or indeed a more hopeless position than that in which Humbert and his army found themselves placed when, after a week's occupation of the county town of Mayo, it became evident to the French General that he was almost completely hemmed in by the British forces, and obliged to choose between the ugly alternatives of fighting a second battle in Castlebar, with no possibility of victory, and the forlorn hope of attempting to reach the north through the one gap still left open to him on the Sligo road. He had originally proposed to move into Roscommon, and thence to march into Ulster, with the ultimate hope of finding himself strong enough to advance on Dublin and fight a decisive battle. But a week's experience of his Irish allies had proved to him the futility of this dream. Owing to the caution and completeness of the Viceroy's arrangements he was, at the moment when he was obliged to make a decisive move, unable to embrace either course with any assurance of success. On the one hand, it was too soon for the reinforcements to have arrived; and on the other, he was entirely unequipped for a contest with either wing of the Royal Army, and even were he able to fight a successful engagement, his force was so small that, as the French Minister of War wrote to Hardy, every victory served to weaken him. As the less desperate, or at anyrate the less humiliating, of these desperate alternatives, he eventually chose to march towards Sligo, possibly deeming that he might find on the road to the north a population more capable of giving efficient assistance than that of Mayo and Galway.

Accordingly, having been joined on September 1st by the garrison left at Killala and Ballina, with the exception of a few officers who remained at the episcopal palace, Humbert left Castlebar on the night of the 3rd or early on the morning of the 4th, resolving, as his aide-de-camp Teeling afterwards

stated, to attempt something desperate, and marched as fast as he could, on the speculation of an insurrection among the country people. Before leaving, he sent the Rector of Castlebar, with eighty prisoners, to Lord Cornwallis. Ellison, falling in with Colonel Crauford and his cavalry on the road, was the first to apprise the latter of the evacuation of Castlebar. Crauford at once advanced, and entering the town late in the evening, between nine and ten o'clock, reoccupied it almost without opposition, receiving the submission of Moore. Next morning, however, pursuant to orders, Crauford set out to follow Humbert, upon whose rear he hung, and contrived to harass him effectively throughout his march. Castlebar was in consequence left with only a small garrison, and the town abandoned to four or five days of uninterrupted loot, which threatened on the 12th to culminate in a complete sack of the town, a body of two thousand Irish making a descent upon it with the avowed intention of plunder. But the small party of Frazer Fencibles and a few yeomanry who had been left in charge, sufficed under the spirited leadership of Lieutenant Urquhart to put the insurgents to flight with heavy loss.

Marching out of Castlebar in the small hours of September 4, and with the Irish recruits placed between the van and the rear to prevent desertions, of which there were already many symptoms, Humbert marched rapidly towards Swineford, and after resting there for a time advanced, by the slopes of the Ox Mountains, within two miles of Bellaghy, where he halted for the night. Here he was informed that General Lake's force, which had marched from Frenchpark, had bivouacked that evening at Ballaghaderreen, only eight miles distant. Sarazin, it is said, urged the expediency of a night attack on the bivouac, but the proposal was overruled by Humbert, and early on the morning of the 5th the march towards Sligo was resumed. At Tubbercurry they fell in with an advanced picket sent out by the Sligo garrison, and composed of a corps of the Leney Yeomanry under Captain O'Hara, the member for the county. After a short skirmish in which one of the yeomanry was killed,



the picket was driven back, and O'Hara at once reported to his commanding officer that a division of the French army had arrived at Collooney, five miles from Sligo, and intended an attack on Sligo. Colonel Vereker, who commanded in Sligo, had received orders through General Nugent not to risk a battle with the main army, but to retire if necessary upon Enniskillen in the event of an attack; but conceiving himself to be dealing with but one division of the French army, and deeming it more advisable in that case to attack than to wait to be attacked by the enemy, he boldly marched out of the town at the head of a little army of three hundred, mainly composed of his own regiment of Limerick Militia, and accompanied by a troop of light dragoons and two curricule guns.

The little village of Collooney, also known as Carrignagat, standing upon the west bank of the Owenmore, which at this point is a broad and picturesque river, had, from its position in the gap between Connaught and the North, been more than once the battle-ground of rival armies. According to antiquaries it had boasted the first stone and mortar castle in Ireland in days even before the coming of the English, and in the thirteenth century had witnessed a sanguinary battle between the rival chieftains of the royal sept of O'Connor, while it had in 1691 been the scene of a sharp encounter between the garrison of Sligo and Sir Albert Conyngham's Dragoons. On September 5, 1798, it was to behold a combat more spirited and more celebrated. The French army had crossed the Owenmore at Collooney, and had halted for refreshment a quarter of a mile further on, on the Sligo side of the village. As they bivouacked quietly, without any suspicion of attack, Vereker and his men, who had marched with every secrecy, and whose approach was concealed by the rising ground in front of them, suddenly appeared on the left of the hill of Carrignagat; a cannon shot falling in the midst of their camp first apprising the French of his presence. Acquainted with the ground, the Colonel had disposed his little forces with much judgment, having his right covered by the hill, while his left was



protected by the river, and having placed a detachment, under Colonel Ormsby, on the hill itself, so as to command the road by which the French must proceed. Thus challenged, Humbert at once advanced in two columns, one moving forward by the road, the second making a detour to the left of Carrignagat Hill, and proceeding up the valley with the object of making a flank attack on the British position. At two o'clock the action began, and for an hour and a half Vereker gallantly sustained the onset of the whole force of the French army and its ten pieces of artillery, aided by one thousand Irish, till finding himself about to be outflanked on the right, and his ammunition being nearly exhausted, he was obliged to sound a retreat, which was effected in good order. The horses being shot under one of the guns, he was obliged to leave them on the field ; but the ammunition wagon and gun harness being safely carried off, the artillery was useless to the captors. So effectively were his troops handled that while the French lost no fewer than twenty-eight killed and thirty wounded, Vereker's casualties were returned at only seven killed and twenty-seven wounded. The fame of this spirited action was enhanced by the gallant conduct of a French—or rather Irish—officer, Bartholomew Teeling, who remarking the execution done by one of Vereker's curricule guns, served with great spirit by a gunner named Whittier, galloped on alone on his grey charger across the stretch of ground which intervened, and riding straight up to the gun shot the sturdy gunner dead with his pistol, and regained the French lines in safety.

Spirited as was the action, and marked as was the military capacity displayed in his dispositions—conduct which is said to have drawn from Humbert the criticism that he was the only general he had met in Ireland—Vereker had made a mistake which might have cost him dear in thus attacking the French army. Luckily for his reputation, the erroneous assumption that he was engaging only a section of the French army (which had led him to disregard the cautious instructions of the Viceroy) was balanced by an opposite misconception on the part of his

opponent. The very rashness of his enterprise proved his safeguard. For Humbert, unable to imagine that such an attack would have been risked by a handful of men, and conjecturing that Vereker represented only an advance guard of Lake's whole army, refrained from any attempt to pursue the retreating force. Supposing Sligo to be effectively defended by a formidable force, he turned off the Sligo road, and, marching by the east of Lough Gill, advanced towards Dromahaire in Leitrim. Fortune thus combined with conduct and capacity to win honour and reward for Vereker, who straightway became famous as the first commander who successfully engaged the French. He received the thanks of the Irish Parliament, was voted a sword of honour by the citizens of Limerick, and a grateful sovereign accorded him the privilege of adopting the motto of 'Collooney,' which has ever since been proudly borne by the noble family of Gort.

## V

### BALLINAMUCK AND THE SECOND EXPEDITION

While Humbert and his troops, followed by Lake and his army, and harassed at every step by the pertinacious Fox-hunters and Hompeschers under Lord Roden and Colonel Crauford, were seeking their way out of Connaught, along the line of least resistance, the United Irishmen of Longford, Cavan, Westmeath, and Roscommon were busily engaged in organising the only independent movement of the peasantry which marked the progress of the French invasion. These counties had for years been noted as the chief stronghold of the Defenders, and in no part of the country had the military organisation of the United Irish movement been adopted more spontaneously or more generally. In three of the counties named, the movement, as in most of the centres of Defenderism, was in the main a religious one, and produced no union of creeds or classes, being confined exclusively to the lower orders of the Roman Catholic population. In Longford, however, the true

principles of Tone and his friends had been embraced in a more genuine spirit, and 'the brotherhood of affection' had been established with greater success. Several Protestants, persons of property and position, had joined the movement, and a communication was consequently kept up with the northern leaders. Two brothers in the neighbourhood of Granard, Hans and Alexander Denniston, who were at the head of the movement in Longford, were men of reputable station, and the latter a lieutenant in the local corps of Yeomanry Cavalry. On the first news of the landing of the French, Hans Denniston had set off to Belfast to take counsel with the members of the Ulster Committee. He returned on September 3, the day Humbert was preparing to march from Castlebar, with a plan which had been agreed upon for seizing Granard, as a post of importance in which the French might establish themselves before marching on Dublin. In the event of the success of this enterprise it was further contemplated to seize the town of Cavan, which as a depôt of arms and ammunition would have been a prize of much value. Emissaries were at once sent out to raise the people, and a force of three thousand men was instantly ready in Westmeath, which marched upon Granard, disarming on its way the corps to which Denniston had belonged, many of whom were disaffected and prepared to join the rebels. Monaghan and Cavan were at the same time organised, and made ready to act with the Longford men against Cavan, the moment Granard should fall. The town was garrisoned by a small yeomanry corps, under Lord Longford, quite inadequate to defend it effectively; and expresses were sent to Cavan requesting reinforcements. Major Porter had just arrived in that town from Belfast with the Argyll Fencibles, to strengthen it against a possible attack by the French army; and on the morning of the 5th he detached Major Cottingham with an infantry detachment of eighty-five men to the relief of Granard. Starting at three o'clock in the morning and marching with the utmost expedition, Cottingham reached Granard at eight o'clock, to find the rebel army in the act of marching on the town in

formidable numbers (said to be six thousand) and commanded by Lieutenant Denniston. Cottingham drew up his whole force, consisting with the garrison of 157 infantry and forty-nine cavalry, in a strong position upon the hill on which Granard is built. At nine o'clock, the rebels advancing in large numbers and in three columns and threatening to outflank him and cut him off from the town, Cottingham retreated to a second position still closer to Granard, where, protected by a bank, he received their attack.

The rebels, adopting the traditional tactics of the Irish Celt, began by driving forward a number of cattle with their pikes; but these were turned aside without doing any damage. Advancing rapidly behind the cattle and armed only with pikes, the vanguard were received with a fire so well directed that they were quickly thrown into disorder, and falling back were charged with the bayonet by Cottingham's men with immense slaughter. As many as four hundred were slain, according to Cottingham's report, and several of the leaders were numbered among the dead. Only one man was killed and two wounded on the loyalist side. Half the rebel army fled over the hills towards Mohill, and the rest towards Edgeworthstown, a good many of the latter joining on their arrival in the disturbances which had meantime broken out in that direction.

On September 4 a large force of peasantry presented themselves at Wilson's Hospital, a Protestant charity for aged men, situate about six miles on the Longford side of Mullingar, and midway between the villages of Multyfarnham and Bunbrusna, on the road from Sligo to Dublin. They demanded arms, which the Rev. Mr. Radcliffe, the chaplain, was obliged to give them. Having obtained the arms, they plundered the house, took Mr. Radcliffe prisoner, and then marched to the Crooked Wood, some five miles off, where they spent the night. Next day (September 5), being joined by a large body of Longford insurgents, they returned to the Hospital and entrenched themselves in what, defended by a force with any pretence to discipline, must have proved a formidable stronghold. On the news of the capture



of the Hospital reaching Granard, Lord Longford, with a party of yeomen and Major Porter, who had come over the day before from Cavan with a detachment of one hundred of the Argyll Fencibles, marched out to Bunbrusna, in the immediate neighbourhood of Wilson's Hospital, a distance of about twelve miles, and took their post on the high road. Here the insurgents, anticipating their attack, marched out to meet the troops, headed by a party five hundred strong, armed with muskets and fowling-pieces. They were received with a heavy fire of grapeshot from the field guns, and, imitating Cottingham's tactics at Granard, Porter's soldiers followed this up with a bayonet charge, before which their assailants quickly broke and were pursued by the Yeomanry Cavalry, who cut many of them down without mercy. It being now dark, the hostilities were perforce suspended, the military lying all night at arms on the road, and the rebels occupying the Hospital. In the dead of night a surprise attack was attempted by a party of rebels, who fired, but ineffectively, at the Highlanders, the latter returning the compliment with destructive effect; and in the morning at daybreak, Porter, advancing to the attack of the Hospital, found it had been evacuated in the darkness, the whole rebel force having fled. Of the troops, only two artillerymen had fallen, while a couple of hundred rebels fell in the action and subsequent pursuit. Both at Granard and Bunbrusna, or Wilson's Hospital, the insurgents displayed much useless and undisciplined but unquestionable valour. As in Wexford, however, their leaders evinced a total incapacity to command; and in each case a force amounting to thousands of peasantry, many of them well armed, was dispersed by a handful of regulars.

Collooney, it will be remembered, had been fought on the 5th, and Humbert, advancing on Dromahaire in co. Leitrim, had marched on the morning of the 6th from that place to Manorhamilton, still pursuing the road to the north. Apparently he was still animated with some vague hope of reaching the Ulster insurgents, on whose co-operation the



French had been taught by Tone to place their main reliance. On his march through Sligo he had lost by desertion many of the insurgents who had accompanied him under Macdonnell and Blake, and up to this point was without any considerable adhesions, the Sligo priests having persistently discouraged the movement in that county, and as far as possible forbidden their people to go out. Pressed closely in the rear by Crauford, he felt himself obliged to lighten his movements by abandoning most of the English cannon captured at Castlebar. He dismounted and left behind him three six-pounders and a tumbril at Collooney, and at Dromahaire threw five more guns over the bridge. At Manorhamilton Humbert appears to have heard for the first time of the movements of the United Irish forces round Granard ; and in the forlorn hope that here at last he might find effective support, and be enabled to maintain himself pending the possible arrival of succour from France, he suddenly doubled back, and descending through the wild hills of the Barony of Dromahaire and by the gloomy shores of Lough Allen, through which pass the upper waters of the Shannon, he crossed that river at Ballintra, near the southern extremity of the lake, on the afternoon of the 7th.

It was now a race between the Viceroy and Humbert which should first reach Granard. Cornwallis, on hearing at Hollymount of the evacuation of Castlebar, had moved to Ballyhaunis on the north-eastern road, when, receiving news from Lake of the change in Humbert's route, he had marched with all speed for Carrick-on-Shannon, with the object of reaching the Shannon before the enemy, and in time to bar their passage across it. Arriving at Carrick on the evening of the 7th, he found he had just failed of this object, and hearing that Humbert had halted for the night at Cloone he marched at ten o'clock on the night of the 7th for Mohill, three miles to the south of that town, to which at the same time he directed Lake to march. Reaching Mohill at daybreak on the morning of the 8th, the Viceroy learned that Humbert had already begun to move towards Granard, and therefore proceeded at once to St. Johnstown, through which village

he knew the French must pass. Humbert's long and rapid four days' march was now near its end. He was followed by Crauford, in command of Lake's cavalry, who pressed so closely on him as to come up in time to foil an attempt to blow up the bridge at Ballintra. Even yet, however, he might conceivably have outstripped his pursuers and gained Granard before Cornwallis could intercept him. Unluckily, however, being obliged to halt at Cloone to give an indispensable rest to his jaded soldiers, the guard which was instructed to awaken the officers in two hours allowed them to sleep for four, thus giving time for Cornwallis to reach St. Johnstown in front of him.

At Cloone, Humbert received a delegate from the insurgent forces, an officer picturesquely clad—according to Fontaine's sarcastic description—in every imaginable accoutrement, and more closely resembling a preux chevalier of the thirteenth century than a soldier of the eighteenth. This hero (upon whom, moreover, Fontaine lays the blame of the fatal delay at Cloone) took up much time in a loquacious exposition of the position and prospects of the insurgents, which, however, resolved itself into the melancholy upshot that they had been defeated in the attack at Granard, and that the insurgents had dispersed at the very moment when they were most needed. This last specimen of Irish co-operation was too much for Humbert, who seems thereupon to have determined on an honourable surrender. Lake arrived at Cloone at seven o'clock on the morning of the 8th, at the head of a column consisting of Carbineers, detachments of the 23rd Light Dragoons, the 1st Fencible Light Dragoons, the Roxburgh Fencible Dragoons (under Sir T. Chapman, Colonel Maxwell, Lord Roden, and Captain Kerr respectively); the 3rd Battalion of Light Infantry, the Armagh and part of the Kerry Militia, the King's, Northampton, and Prince of Wales's Fencible Infantry (under Colonel Innes of the 64th Regiment, Viscount Gosford, Lord Glاندore, Major Ross, Colonel Bulkeley, and Colonel Macartney respectively). Colonel Crauford (with whom was Lord Roden) was the first to come up with the enemy, whom he

vainly summoned to surrender. By this time the French forces had passed out of the county of Leitrim and reached the little village of Ballinamuck, in the county of Longford, four miles beyond Cloone. Of the nine hundred French with whom he began his march, Humbert had still with him eight hundred; and having been joined on the way through Leitrim by a good many insurgents, had also a force of about one thousand five hundred Irish. Finding himself so closely pressed by Colonel Crauford, who, with his cavalry detachment of Foxhunters and Hompeschers and a few companies of the Armagh and Monaghan Militia, had been sent forward by Lake, he prepared for the battle which was now inevitable—or rather for what was, so far as the French troops were concerned, little more than a sham fight, a formality of resistance necessary to the vindication of French honour.

The French General posted his army advantageously on a hill, on which he planted his cannon, and was protected on the left by a lake, and on the right by a lake and bog. It is a little difficult to collect from the accounts the precise extent of the resistance offered by the French, and a certain degree of confusion and perhaps of divided counsels seems to have marked their conduct in this final scene. Crauford, on overtaking the French rearguard, appears to have summoned them to surrender, and not being attended to, attacked them, when—after a few moments' fighting—Sarazin, who commanded in that part of the field, threw down his arms, and upwards of two hundred soldiers followed his example. Under the impression that this surrender was general, Captain Cradock and General Pakenham, two of Lake's staff, rode forward with about twenty dragoons to the main body, but to their surprise were fired on by the Irish contingent, and Cradock received a slight wound. Colonel Innes, with a battalion of Light Infantry, now came up, and thereupon a confused and partial struggle commenced of some twenty to thirty minutes' duration, at the end of which, Lake's column having come up and further resistance being manifestly futile, Humbert surrendered at discretion. He and his officers and army were at once treated as

prisoners of war; but no quarter was given to the Irishmen, who were chased by the cavalry into the adjacent bog, and slaughtered without mercy to the number of five hundred. Many of them were taken prisoners, of whom Blake of Galway and nine of the deserters from the Longford Militia were hanged on the spot. Macdonnell, more fortunate, escaped through the bogs, making his way to France, and ultimately to America. One of the Longford men saved his life by his wit. Being told he was to be hanged for deserting at Castlebar, he observed with equal humour and truth: 'Shure, your honours, I think it's the army that was the deserters. I stayed where I was, and they left me alone.' When Sarazin threw down his arms, Lord Roden, who was also under the impression that the surrender was already general, had ridden forward with his Fencibles, and had found himself surrounded by the French van to the number of four hundred, and for fifteen minutes, pending the result at the other side of the field, had been a prisoner in charge of their hussars—a period during which the French officers loaded with execrations their Irish allies. The English loss, however, was trivial. Only twelve were killed, of whom two were Hessians, who being mistaken for French were unfortunately killed by the Yeomanry.

Miss Edgeworth gives a pretty and vivid account of the scene of the battlefield, which she visited a day or two after:

Enclosed I send you a little sketch of the situation of the field of battle at Ballinamuck. It is about four miles from the hills. My father, mother, and I rode out to look at the camp; perhaps you recollect a pretty town on the road where there is a little stream with a three-arched bridge. In the fields, which rise in a gentle slope on the right-hand side of this stream, about sixty bell tents were pitched, the arms all ranged on the grass; before the tents, poles with little streamers flying here and there; groups of men leading their horses to water; and others filling bottles and black pots; some cooking under the hedges; Highlanders gathering blackberries. The various uniforms looked pretty.<sup>1</sup>



It seems almost certain that Humbert had no serious intention of giving battle at Ballinamuck, a surmise which the conduct of Sarazin in surrendering almost at the first summons tends to confirm. His army was not only completely tired out by incessant marching, but was thoroughly disheartened by the lack of support from its Irish allies; and as early as Collooney Humbert is said to have been urged by his troops to surrender, but to have declined on the plea that he was not in presence of a sufficient force of the enemy to do so honourably. Of the two hundred of the Longford and Kilkenny Militia who joined at Castlebar, all but sixty had deserted before Ballinamuck. The country people had behaved so badly to their allies, plundering and obtaining arms on false pretences, that some had to be shot as examples, and it was alleged by Sarazin that the French plans were betrayed to English officers by the Irish allies. According to more than one account, the French even fired on the flying rebels in token of their disgust. On the other hand, the Irish were not without their own grievances. They complained bitterly of having been left to their fate at Ballinamuck. Among the prisoners many of them gave a pitiable account of their treatment by the French, and the hardships they had suffered in the campaign, describing themselves as half starved, having seldom anything but potatoes, which there was no time to cook, while the French, they asserted, lived on the choicest plunder of the houses of the gentry. A large number of prisoners were marched to Carrick-on-Shannon, where Lord Cornwallis, anxious to avoid indiscriminate slaughter, but feeling the necessity of making an example, directed that a certain number should be hanged. A field officer thus described the mode in which these orders were obeyed :

An order arrived from Lord Cornwallis directing a certain number of them to be hanged without further ceremony, and a number of bits of paper were rolled up, the word 'Death' being written on the number ordered; and with these in his hat the Adjutant, Captain Ray—on whom devolved the management of this wretched lottery—entered



the courthouse and the drawing began. As fast as a wretch drew the ticket, he was handed out and hanged at the door. I am not sure of the number thus dealt with, but seventy were actually hanged. It was a dreadful duty to devolve on any regiment, but somehow or other men's minds had grown as hard as the nether millstone. I know it from my own feelings. I would go some miles out of my way to avoid an execution now, yet I well remember the indifference with which I looked on such a spectacle in 1798.

In contrast to the behaviour of the Royal troops in Wexford, Cornwallis was enabled to congratulate his troops not only on their zeal and spirit, but upon their orderly conduct. On the day after Ballinamuck he issued the following General Order :

Lord Cornwallis cannot too much applaud the zeal and spirit which has been manifested by the army, from the commencement of the operations against the invading enemy until the surrender of the French forces. The perseverance with which the soldiers supported the extraordinary marches which were necessary to stop the progress of the very active enemy does them the greatest credit ; and Lord Cornwallis heartily congratulates them on the happy issue of their meritorious exertions.

The corps of yeomanry, in the whole country through which the army has passed, have rendered the greatest services, and are peculiarly entitled to the thanks of the Lord-Lieutenant, for their not having tarnished that courage and loyalty which they displayed in the cause of their country by any acts of wanton cruelty towards their deluded fellow subjects.

The number of the French prisoners who surrendered at Ballinamuck was, according to Lake's official return, ninety-six officers and 748 non-commissioned officers and privates, with three Irish general officers, Roche, Blake, and Teeling. According to the probably more accurate report made by Ardooin to the French Directory, the total was but 794 of all ranks.

Humbert's brief and indeed laconic despatch to the Directory, written while on his way to Dover, is really an accurate epitome of the actions and fate of the expedition :

Lichfield, 2 Vendémiaire.  
September 25, 1798.

Citizen Directors,—After having obtained the greatest successes, and made the arms of the French Republic to triumph during my stay in Ireland, I have at length been obliged to submit to a superior force of thirty thousand men, commanded by Lord Cornwallis. I am a prisoner of war upon my parole.

HUMBERT.

At the moment when this despatch was penned Admiral Bompard's fleet, with Hardy and his troops on board, was on its way to Ireland, and Savary was engaged in organising a second expedition to Killala. For although the French Government had exhibited but little vigour in pushing their scheme of invasion, the Directory had not by any means abandoned Humbert to his fate. The fleet of Admiral Bompard, comprising the *Hoche*, a line-of-battle ship, and seven frigates, had been anchored in the roadstead at Brest, ready to embark Hardy and his three thousand troops, ever since July 25, and had received on July 30 instructions practically identical with those issued to Savary and Humbert. But the despatch of the necessary stores was delayed until August 5, when at last the embarkation commenced, and even when all else was ready the 150,000 francs with which Hardy was to be supplied still lay in the Treasury, and it was not until ten days after Humbert had set sail that all was at length ready. Hardy's nominal force of three thousand was actually considerably less. It comprised 2,587 men and 172 officers. Among the latter was the Ulysses of the enterprise, Theobald Wolfe Tone, who, under the *nom de guerre* of General Smith, was attached to the staff of General Hardy and sailed on board the *Hoche*.

No sooner had the official obstacles to the departure of Bompard's fleet been successfully overcome than Nature interposed a yet more formidable impediment. General Frost was not more inimical to Napoleon in his Russian campaign than was General Wind to Tone in his schemes for the invasion of Ireland. The winds for several days forbade the departure of the expedition, and when at length,

on August 20, a favouring breeze arrived, Bompard found himself menaced by a powerful English fleet of forty-two sail. Thus, although, taking advantage of the thick weather, the French Admiral set sail in the night, it was only to return to port next day with two of his frigates disabled by a collision, and with the knowledge that the blockade was too effective to be defied with any prospects of success. Hardy, eager for the fray, and filled with the idea that 'what the Irish needed above all things was a General,' wrote to his Government suggesting that he should himself, with a few officers and a small force of four hundred men, embark in a frigate at Rochefort and endeavour to reach Ireland. He was informed, however, that no vessels capable of putting to sea were then at that port, and he was ordered to await the moment when Bompard might find himself able to get out of Brest. But Savary had returned from Killala before that moment arrived, and long before Hardy sighted the Irish coast Humbert had been forced to surrender.

While Bompard lay idle at Brest, Admiral Savary had returned from Ireland. He had left Killala on August 24, but delayed by bad weather, as well as by the necessity for giving a wide berth to an English squadron under Sir John Warren, it was not until September 9 that he anchored near Royan, in the estuary of the Gironde. He at once notified his Government of the successful disembarkation of Humbert's force, and of his preliminary success at Killala, and then proceeded to Rochelle. Savary's report roused the Directory to the necessity for immediate exertion. On the 13th he received orders to prepare at once to return to Ireland with a fresh force to reinforce Humbert, and troops were ordered to concentrate for that purpose. At the same time Bompard and Hardy were advised of Savary's intelligence, and enjoined to make every effort to get under way, and, once started, to effect a landing at Killala and join forces with Humbert. Two days later orders were given to one of Bompard's frigates, the *Biche*, to proceed with all speed to Ireland to convey to Humbert the news of approaching

succour, but the Admiral with his whole fleet, the *Biche* included, had sailed before this despatch could be delivered. For on the 16th he had put out from Brest.

But Bompard had hardly got to sea when he found himself pursued by a small British force, to avoid which he was obliged to steer in a southerly direction, and in his effort to escape he had the ill-luck to fall in four days later with a larger squadron. After being chased for several days he eluded his pursuers, but only by making a detour so wide that when on October 10 he at length arrived in Lough Swilly, he found that the vessels which had been following him had joined Warren's fleet, which, warned of Bompard's departure from Brest, had made all sail to the North of Ireland, and was ready to meet the French Admiral in superior force. The battle which ensued was brief and decisive. The *Hoche*, overpowered by a vigorous cannonade, was obliged to surrender. Several of the frigates followed her example. Others escaped from Lough Swilly only to be overtaken by English frigates in the open sea, and of Bompard's whole fleet only three of the smallest of his vessels got back to France.

Savary's second expedition was scarcely more fortunate. A number of difficulties arose in equipping it, and it was not until October 11 that, with three frigates, a corvette, and two smaller vessels, and carrying with him a force of close on eleven hundred soldiers under General Cortez, he was able to set sail from Rochelle. The voyage of this little fleet was uneventful, and on October 27 Savary once more found himself at anchor in the Bay of Killala. He had received very explicit instructions not to disembark the troops unless he should ascertain that Hardy had already arrived and had effected a landing. Just as on the occasion of his first visit, Savary's fleet was taken for an English one, and a party of two officers and a dozen soldiers put off from Killala and boarded the Admiral's ship. From these Savary learned the capitulation of Humbert and the destruction of Bompard's fleet. Relying on this intelligence he at once determined to return to France. Cortez, who commanded the troops, had,



however, received different intelligence from a party of Irish who came on board about the same time, and who reported that Hardy with his army had made good their landing in Donegal. Relying on this intelligence he gave orders to disembark. A dispute ensued between Savary and Cortez as to which of these widely different versions was to be accepted, but Savary, wisely relying on the account of the British officers, and threatened besides by the appearance of some British ships, insisted on setting sail at once for France. He was not a moment too soon, for on the day following four British ships hove in sight. By these Savary was pursued for three days, and it was only by throwing overboard his heavy guns and a large part of his supplies that he was enabled to make good his escape. Ten days later his squadron, scattered in their hurried flight, reached the coast of France, and the invasion of Ireland was at an end.<sup>1</sup> It remains only to describe the fate of the solitary vessel other than Savary's first fleet which succeeded in effecting a landing of troops in Ireland. The otherwise contemptible expedition of Napper Tandy on the brig *Anacréon* deserves notice as the only one of the many schemes devised to co-operate with Humbert which, inasmuch as it reached the Irish coast in safety, had even a moment's semblance of success.

The fame of Napper Tandy has acquired a familiarity wider than that of many far abler associates, through the accident which has embalmed his name in the touching requiem of the United Irish movement, the immortal street ballad of 'The Wearing of the Green.' But neither in his early life, when he was an active leader of the Dublin populace and a prominent member of the Volunteer Convention, nor in the latest and most famous adventures of a roystering career does he seem to have merited the chance eminence to which he has thus attained. After having fled from Ireland in 1793, to avoid persecution as a prominent Defender, Tandy had shared Tone's exile in America, and when he learned that the latter had succeeded in his

<sup>1</sup> The incidents of Savary's second expedition are detailed with great fulness in *Projets et Tentatives de Débarquement*, vol. ii. chap. viii.



mission to France he had followed his friend to Paris. There, however, his vanity wounded by the pre-eminence accorded to his youthful ally, he had become the head of an Irish party opposed to Tone, whose designs he embarrassed by what the latter describes in his journal as 'ridiculous rhodomontades,' representing his influence as sufficient to attract thirty thousand men to his standard the moment he could unfurl it in Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Tandy was successful, however, in securing some credit with the French Directory, and in the plans for the invasion of Ireland was eventually included the allocation to his control of the 16-gun brig *Anacréon*, reported to be one of the fastest-sailing corvettes in the French navy, with a small quota of French troops on board, and a considerable supply of arms. Accompanied by the squad of Irish refugees who had attached themselves to his fortunes, a party which unfortunately included at least two who were ready to betray him to the British Government, this elderly ex-citizen of Dublin transformed into a general of the French army set sail from Dunkirk on September 4. Our knowledge of Tandy's character and the story of his last adventure has hitherto depended mainly, if not exclusively, on British or Irish sources of information, which, however they may differ in details, are unanimous in stigmatising the conduct of the leader of the expedition as at best that of a poltroon. There is strong evidence that on more than one critical occasion he was helplessly intoxicated, and it is certain that his only contribution to the emancipation of the people he came to encourage in insurrection was an absurdly inflated proclamation in which, at the very moment of abandoning the enterprise, he bade his countrymen to 'wage a war of extermination' against their oppressors. It is right, however, to say that the narrative contained in the report made by Ameil,<sup>2</sup> the commander of

<sup>1</sup> It is stated in the life of Wolfe Tone that Humbert's premature departure from Rochelle was prompted by the importunities of Tandy; but there is no other authority for this statement, and it does not appear probable.

<sup>2</sup> *Projets et Tentatives de Débarquement aux Iles Britanniques, 1793-1805*, tome deuxième, pp. 150-157.

the French troops on board the *Anacréon*, to his superiors, the conduct of Tandy appears in a light, ineffectual indeed, but less repulsive than that attributed to him by his associates among his own countrymen.

From Ameil's narrative it appears that the *Anacréon* left Dunkirk on September 4 with its complement of soldiers and artillery, 'charged to carry to Ireland Napper Tandy and several of his fellow-countrymen, with supplies, for the encouragement of the United Irishmen.' The expedition reached the little isle of Arran off the Donegal coast on September 16, and anchored opposite the pretty village of Rutland, by whose inhabitants word was speedily brought of the unhappy fate of Humbert's expedition. The people, however, maintained that despite the defeat of the French the insurrection was still in full swing, that as many as a thousand men were assembled in a church hard by, ready to join the French, and that these were certain to receive large additions from the Ulster counties.

A council of war was at once called by Tandy to consider these tidings, and decide on the course to be followed. According to Ameil the French officers were unanimous in advising the disembarkation of the force on the mainland, being of opinion that the expedition of the *Anacréon* had no relation to that which had set out from Rochefort, and that the success or failure of Humbert should in no way affect the object of the mission, which was, according to Ameil's view of his instructions, 'to facilitate the return of Napper Tandy and his comrades to Ireland, to put at their disposal the arms and stores carried in the ship, and to help them by the experience of the French artillery officers to nourish and sustain among the Irish people the spirit of liberty and independence.' Such, however, was not Tandy's view, and it was ultimately determined that Tandy and the French officers should go ashore and ascertain how far the reports which had been brought were trustworthy. They accordingly landed, hoisted the Irish standard, assembled as many of the peasantry as they could collect, and distributed proclamations and cockades. A visit to the post-office, where

the letters were seized and opened, speedily confirmed the news of Humbert's capitulation, and Tandy thereupon decided not to disembark his force. Greatly to the dissatisfaction of the French officers, he determined to go aboard ship again at once, and was carried in triumph to the boat on the shoulders of some of the peasantry.<sup>1</sup> Once on board again Tandy gave orders to set sail, and the *Anacreon*, after undergoing various and exciting vicissitudes, capturing an English merchantman in the Orkneys, and driven thence as far as Norway by a British man-of-war, reached Dunkirk with its futile tale of fiasco just two months after it had set out. So ended the last exploit of the vainglorious Tandy, and the last expedition which made good even a momentary footing in Ireland. Of the leader's share in it, it is but just to say that Ameil's narrative, though conclusive as to his ineptitude, mitigates in some degree the judgment hitherto passed upon Tandy's demeanour on the occasion, and conveys the impression that Jonah Barrington's qualified dispraise is after all more just than Tone's uncompromising censure: 'Though in many instances erroneous and violent, his private character furnished no ground to doubt the integrity of his public one; and like many of those persons who occasionally spring up in revolutionary periods, he acquired celebrity without being able to account for it, and possessed an influence without rank and capacity.'

## VI

### 'WHAT PASSED AT KILLALA'

The story now returns to the little community at Killala. During the four weeks which elapsed between the departure of the French General for Castlebar and his final defeat and surrender at Ballinamuck, the loyalists at Killala

<sup>1</sup> In the narrative of the United Irishman Orr, which is printed in the *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 404, it is stated that when Tandy landed at Rutland for a few hours 'he intoxicated himself to such a degree as to be incapable of getting to the boat.' History, however, may charitably accept Ameil's kindlier version of the incident.

passed through a period of the most anxious disquietude, hope and despair alternating rapidly in their breasts as the chances of war depressed or cheered the foes by whom they were surrounded and outnumbered. Cut off from all communication with their friends, and surrounded by a population which became every day more turbulent and difficult to restrain, they were entirely without information of the progress of the rebellion, save what came to them from French or rebel sources, and, in the language of Bishop Stock, knew no more of what was going forward in the rest of Ireland than if they were at Calcutta. While the French garrison remained with them the inhabitants of the castle were able to contemplate the situation with some approach to equanimity. M. Charost, the Commandant, proved to be a man of sense, honour, and humanity, in whom the experience of a few days inspired feelings of the highest respect and regard for the gentlemen confided to his charge. During this period, too, the captives were cheered by the arrival in the bay of two vessels which, though they were at first hailed by the French as the forerunners of Hardy's army, proved to be an English squadron. A frigate, the *Cerberus*, with her cutter, anchored and sent out her boats to fire two trading-vessels laden with oatmeal and in possession of the French. This, however, was but a short-lived hope, for after the accomplishment of this not very important feat the frigate sailed away. Three days after the General's departure news arrived, by an express messenger to Charost, of the French victory at Castlebar, and on the following day Toussaint, one of Humbert's principal lieutenants, with other officers, arrived with authentic details of the battle. In the course of a conversation with the Bishop, this officer made some frank admissions as to the purpose of the invasion. The real object, he stated, was merely to annoy England and to force a peace. The French had no expectation of being able to effect a revolution with so small a force, and looked on themselves as a forlorn hope who must ultimately be forced to surrender themselves prisoners of war. Dr. Ellison and another of the Bishop's captive guests were permitted

to accompany Toussaint back to Castlebar, where during the remainder of his stay the Rector was treated, as has been seen, with much consideration, and he finally escaped to Dublin on the evacuation of Castlebar.

Meantime the Bishop, though he had to deplore a melancholy waste of his substance, the destruction of his crops, and the slaughter of his cattle, had suffered little personal inconvenience. If his French visitors had helped themselves liberally to his goods so long as his stores lasted, they did not neglect him when his cellar and larder had been exhausted. The commissary of stores made it his first care to provide for the Bishop's household, which consisted of twenty-five persons in the upper story, the total number actually sleeping in the castle numbering as many as seventy-eight. Meat, bread, and even wine, were brought in daily and supplied without stint. The provender was of course obtained at the expense of the loyalists of the town and neighbourhood, but the Bishop's conscience was soon accommodated to his circumstances. 'I have so much honesty left yet,' he humorously notes (*à propos* of a requisition of a supply of mutton from his friend, Mr. Kirkwood), 'that when I take a neighbour's sheep, I spare him one joint for his private use.' On another occasion he writes: 'Here comes a cargo of wine and rum to my cellar from Ballina plundered from poor Colonel King. Cacus was not a greater robber than I am.'

On September 1 however, a week after Humbert's departure, the captives experienced a much more serious alarm. Orders were received from the Commandant to despatch immediately to Castlebar all the French garrison at Killala, except Charost himself and a couple of subordinate officers, Ponson and Boudet, who remained behind to protect the town, the Bishop's son Arthur accompanying the departing garrison as a hostage for the safety of the Commander. The Bishop and Protestant townspeople of Killala were not unnaturally dismayed at being thus summarily obliged to exchange the protection of a disciplined French garrison for that of two hundred United



Irishmen, with no better guarantee for their safety than the doubtful authority of the few French officers who were to remain. And indeed it quickly became apparent that this authority could not always be enforced. The country round Killala was by this time in a state of absolute lawlessness. Robberies and assaults had become incessant. To secure the inhabitants from danger, Charost's first act was to issue a proclamation inviting all the inhabitants, without distinction of religion or party, to apply to him for arms for their own defence. This offer, which included the prisoners, was eagerly embraced by the Protestants who had been disarmed at the taking of the town, and a distribution of weapons took place on the evening of September 1. But the Roman Catholic population and the armed recruits could not at all sympathise with the impartiality of the Commandant. They murmured loudly against trusting arms to their Protestant fellow-townsmen, and one of their officers actually repudiated Charost's control. 'The Bishop laboured hard to pacify the malcontents, amid clamour and darkness and the confusion of three languages.' Ultimately the Protestants were obliged to purchase peace by a voluntary surrender of the arms Charost had provided them with.

By this time the Irish population, no longer restrained by the presence of the French troops, were indulging pretty freely in the delights of plundering the gentry. Tyrawley's new house at Deal Castle was reduced to a mere wreck; Castle Lacken, the seat of Sir John Palmer, and several other houses, were plundered. It is right, however, to observe that throughout the invasion the violence of the peasantry was restricted to robbery and looting. Though the district of Killala was for upwards of a month in the hands of the rebels, not a single human life was taken in cold blood. In the Bishop's words, not a drop of blood was shed in the whole course of the rising except in the field of battle, and even there not one loyalist was slain for every ten rebels.

To check outrage as far as possible, Charost and the Bishop, who had by this time arrived at a complete mutual

understanding, the Commandant being almost as much a prisoner to the Irish as Dr. Stock, devised a system of civil government for the town. Following the example set by Humbert at Castlebar, a cantonal administration was formed. The country was divided into departments, with an elective magistrate and a guard of sixteen men at the head of each. Arms and ammunition were served out to the latter on the express stipulation that they were to act only as a police, and not to be employed against their sovereign. The town of Killala was placed under the protection of a body of one hundred and fifty men, at the orders of Mr. James Devitt, a Roman Catholic tradesman of moderation and respectability, who was elected to the post of civil magistrate. The castle, being the only place which could be deemed at all secure from depredation, had become the depository of a vast amount of valuable property, plate, cash, leases, etc., being confided to the Bishop's care by the neighbouring gentry. To provide for the safety of these treasures, as well as of its numerous inhabitants, a guard of twenty of the most trustworthy Irish in the garrison was appointed, who being lodged, clothed, and fed better than their comrades, might be counted on to exhibit some degree of fidelity.

The next step was to concoct measures to prevent the inordinate waste of provisions, which threatened not only to strip the country of its supplies, but even to create an epidemic in the town from the reckless slaughter of cattle. As many as seven bullocks were killed of a morning, and as there was no salt, and the weather was warm, much of the meat had actually to be buried to prevent danger from putrefaction. It was therefore arranged that the supply of meat should be regulated daily by a requisition from the civil magistrate based on the certificate of the town-major as to the amount required, and that the beasts should be brought to a common slaughter-house. To enforce obedience it was ordained that any person caught driving in and killing cattle without a magistrate's order should be at once shot.

Adversity makes strange bedfellows. The Bishop and his nominal gaolers, thus left to themselves, soon became

close friends. M. Charost, with his two officers Boudet and Ponson, and occasionally the Irishman O'Keon, messed together with the Bishop and his family. Of these officers Dr. Stock has left in his narrative a graphic and pleasing description.

Charost was a Parisian, the son of a watchmaker who had settled in St. Domingo, where he had married and become the owner of a thriving plantation. Driven out by the war, he had lost everything, including his wife and child, and had entered the army shortly before the Revolution broke out. Remaining in the service of the Republic, he had risen to the rank of lieutenant-colonel (*chef du demi-brigade*), and happening to be with his brother at Rochelle he had been suddenly ordered to serve with this expedition. 'His religion,' he told the Bishop, 'he had yet to seek, because, his father being a Catholic and his mother a Protestant, they left him the liberty of choosing for himself, and he had never yet found time to make this inquiry, which, however, he was sensible he ought to make, and would make at some time when Heaven should grant him repose. In the interim he believed in God, was inclined to think there must be a future state, and was very sure that while he lived in this world it was his duty to do all the good to his fellow creatures that he could. Yet what he did not exhibit in his own conduct he appeared to respect in others; for he took care that no noise or disturbance should be made in the castle on Sundays, while the family and many Protestants from the town were assembled in the library at prayers.'

Boudet, the next in rank, was a tall Norman of a somewhat boastful disposition, though of unusual gravity for a Frenchman. He was a captain of Foot and had been bred in the Ecole Militaire at Paris, and was much the best educated of the French officers. He had seen hard service with the army of the Rhine. 'In person, complexion, and height, he was no inadequate representative of the Knight of La Mancha, whose example he followed in a recital of his own prowess and wonderful exploits, delivered in measured language and with an imposing seriousness of aspect.'

The third officer, Ponson, was a native of Navarre, a little fellow, but of great vivacity and good humour. 'Wherever he was his presence was testified by a noise as loud and as pertinacious as that of a corn-crake; it was a continued roll of talk, or laughter, or whistling. The decencies of polished life he had never known, or, if he had, he affected to despise them. Yet in a gloomy hour this eternal cackle had its uses, and more than once kept our spirits buoyant when terror pressed heaviest. Ponson was hardy, and patient to admiration of want of rest. He was ready at a moment's notice to sally out on the marauders, whom, if he caught, he belaboured without mercy. Tied to a sword as long as himself, and armed with pistols, firelock, and bayonet, he stretched himself up to view till he became terrific. He was strictly honest, and could not bear the want of this quality in others; so that his patience was pretty well tried by his Irish allies, for whom he could not find names sufficiently expressive of contempt.'

Thanks to the excellence of the precautions taken, little or no damage was done to the buildings in the town, and religious intolerance was held effectively in check. One attempt was made on September 9th to appropriate the cathedral: the bell was broken and the locks wrenched off the gate; but the remonstrances of the Bishop prevailed on O'Donel to return the key to his own keeping. Thereafter the building remained unmolested, and when all was over a sum of less than a guinea sufficed to make good the slight damage to locks and belfry. Outside the town of Killala, however, matters were far otherwise, and many churches bore marks of violence. The most serious injuries were offered to the Reverend Mr. Marshall, the minister of a Presbyterian colony of weavers who had been planted there by Lord Arran some years previously, and in whose skill with the loom, it is interesting to note, originated those industries which in our own day have been fostered so successfully by the convents of Foxford. A newly erected meeting-house was completely wrecked, and the minister himself driven for refuge to the castle. The pretext for the violence shown to

these people was an unjustifiable charge of Orangeism, for no lodge had been founded in Mayo, and the Bishop himself, as has been already said, had entered a protest against the Orange oaths as intolerant and indictable. Despite a protection from Charost these poor folk were subjected to nocturnal visits, their property seized, and many of them carried off to Ballina, where Truc, the French officer in charge, was a person much less humane and tolerant than Charost, and confined as close prisoners for the alleged crime of being Orangemen. By Charost's orders and personal intervention they were, however, soon released.

For about a fortnight after the departure of Humbert from Killala, comparative order was thus maintained under the regulations of Charost. So long as the tale of French success continued uninterrupted, French order and French discipline were an effectual restraint on the license of an excited population and on the sanguinary violence of the native recruits. With the first rumours of a reverse, however, the situation became much more alarming. On the morrow after the battle of Collooney a crowd armed with pikes, for which they had by this time exchanged their French weapons, came to demand permission, which they were with difficulty restrained from taking ungranted, to cut down all the young ash-plants in the castle demesne for pike-handles, and the first rumours of the defeat at Ballinamuck, with the consequent apprehension that the era of license must soon be terminated, brought with them a marked increase in the depredations and destruction of property. On November 13th Mr. Fortescue, Member for Louth, was brought in a prisoner from Ballina, and confirmed the news of the French surrender. He was a brother of the clergyman who had been shot at the taking of Ballina, and pushing forward incautiously in the desire to obtain news of his brother, and under the impression that the town had already been recovered by the King's troops, found himself a prisoner in the hands of a patrol. Fortescue's intelligence was fully confirmed by two letters from Humbert's army.

The little garrison were now eager for the arrival of the



King's troops; and Charost himself was no less anxious than the Bishop for the moment when an honourable surrender should terminate his difficulties, foreseeing how impossible must be the task of keeping the violence of the people in check. It was agreed to withhold from the Irish recruits, so long as possible, the news of the final defeat of the French by Lord Cornwallis. Unfortunately, a full fortnight had to elapse before the arrival of General Trench on September 23rd. Although Castlebar had been occupied as early as the 12th, and although a large number of troops had been collected there, it was not until the 22nd that General Trench marched to the relief of Killala. It is difficult to understand the cause of the delay, which was answerable not only for much cruel suspense, but for a great and unnecessary increase in the destruction of property.

'The work of devastation,' wrote the Bishop in his diary, 'continues with such perseverance that when our friends come I fear they will find it a second La Vendée.' Prohibitions ceased to be respected, and apprehensions were felt by the garrison of an attack from the now numerous body of pikemen, whose officer, O'Donel, Charost was obliged to order under arrest. A leader from the camp outside came in with the announcement that the Irish had determined to imprison all the Protestants in the cathedral as hostages for their own security. He was told by the Commandant that, while he was willing to head the Irish if they wished it against the English army, he would put himself at the head of the Protestants of the town if any attempt were made on the persons or property of the latter, saying that he was *chef de brigade* and not *chef de brigands*. It soon became impossible to rely on the guard who had been appointed to protect the castle, and Charost accordingly made preparations for its defence against his late allies. Arms were distributed to the Bishop, his family, and such servants as could be trusted, and the French officers kept watch by turns through the night.

On the 19th the apprehensions of the people were further inflamed by rumours of the ill-treatment of the Irish prisoners at Castlebar, and they threatened immediate retaliation. The

Bishop, who from the time of the departure of the garrison had been the sole interpreter to Charost, was sent out to reason with them ; and suggesting that before resorting to reprisals the truth of the rumours should be first established, he advised the despatch of a joint embassy to Castlebar with a flag of truce and letters explaining their situation to General Trench, and expressing a hope that nothing would be done to the Irish prisoners in Castlebar which might provoke reprisals on those in Killala. This was agreed to, and on the following morning Dean Thompson on the one side, and one Roger Maguire on the other, set out on this mission. The two days which elapsed between the departure and return of these envoys were the most troubled of the whole. Crowds of the peasantry armed with pikes continued to assemble from the neighbouring villages, and could not be restrained from ransacking the town, every house in which, except the castle, was completely pillaged. Deputations came to Charost demanding permission to disarm such of the neighbouring gentry as had succeeded in arming themselves and protecting their houses : to which the Commandant replied that he would fire on them himself should he catch them plundering. By this time the countenance shown to the English and Protestants by the French had almost destroyed the authority of the latter with the Irish, who were with the utmost difficulty restrained from an attack on the castle. At length, on Saturday 22nd, the embassy returned from Castlebar, with an assurance from General Trench, which sufficed to allay the danger of an attack on the castle, that the prisoners there would be treated with all possible tenderness, and with private information for the Bishop that he might expect the army on the morning of the following Sunday. On Saturday evening the welcome sound of artillery in the direction of Ballina announced that succour was impending, and from the Steeple Hill could be seen the flash of artillery.

In fulfilment of his promise General Trench, who was in command at Castlebar, had left that town on Saturday 22nd, having previously directed Lord Portarlington, at Sligo, to join him at Ballina on the following morning with

his regiment; forty of the 24th Light Dragoons, the three corps of yeomanry, and the Armagh Militia, who were quartered at Foxford, being also directed to meet at the same rendezvous. Trench, taking with him the Roxburgh Light Dragoons, three hundred of the Downshire Regiment, the Kerry Regiment, the Prince of Wales's Fencibles, and two curriele guns, marched out by the Barnageragh road, the same through which Humbert had made his forced march to Castlebar, and arrived at Ballina next day, to find that Portarlinton and Acheson, though repeatedly attacked, had occupied that town, the rebel garrison retreating to Killala. Without halting, the General immediately advanced on Killala. Dividing his force, which numbered some twelve hundred men with five guns, into two divisions, he sent forward the Kerry Regiment under Colonel Crosbie and the Knight of Kerry, together with the Tyrawley Yeomanry, with orders to proceed by a forced march, involving a detour of three miles, so as to cut off the fugitives in their retreat to the north-west. This movement was so successfully executed that the Kerry Militia appeared at the further end of the town simultaneously with the arrival of the main body of the army at the Ballina entrance. Exposed thus to attack from both sides, and hemmed in in every direction by the British troops, the issue of the conflict could not be doubted. Nevertheless the rebels, inspired by the courage of despair, fought with great gallantry. Posted to the number of four thousand behind a stone wall on a hill above the road, they maintained a vigorous fire upon the Downshire Regiment, which led the advance. Though, owing to unskilful marksmanship, they did but little injury, and killed only one man, their shot passing over the heads of the soldiers, they managed to keep their assailants at bay until the Frazer Fencibles, filing off to right and left and crossing a marsh which separated them from the hill, poured a heavy fire into their flank. Then they gave way, and fled through the town, hotly pursued by the Roxburgh cavalry under Colonel Eliot. The slaughter that ensued was sanguinary and indiscriminate. Scores were cut down in the streets, and those who made

their way through the town escaped only to meet with the fire of the Kerry Militia at the other end. According to General Trench, between five and six hundred, or, according to Bishop Stock's more moderate estimate, at least four hundred were slain.

The Bishop and his family viewed the battle from the window of the library. The French officers, though they deemed it their duty to place themselves formally at the head of the rebels, took no very active part in the resistance, and so soon as the issue of the contest was apparent made haste to surrender their swords, which the General, informed of their treatment of the Bishop, allowed them to retain, with their effects and bedrooms. O'Keon, as an Irishman, was at first refused this indulgence, though naturalised as a Frenchman; but he was at the Bishop's instance allowed to remain with his comrades pending the meeting of the court-martial.

Though little or no injury was done to the loyalists by the fire of the enemy, the townspeople did not escape unscathed from the battle. The efforts of the flying rebels to find refuge in the houses caused much confusion, and in the case of Mr. Andrew Kirkwood actually proved fatal. As he stood at his door, shouting 'God save the King!' in the exultation of victory, a rebel burst through the door followed by a volley of musketry from a party of the pursuing soldiers, which proved instantly fatal to the too triumphant loyalist. This gentleman had, curiously enough, been haunted by a presentiment (a foreboding which, as the Bishop observes, often tends to work its own accomplishment) that he would not survive the recovery of the town. A yet more unfortunate misadventure caused the death of a number of Protestant farmers from Carrowcarden, a neighbouring village, who had been forced by the rebels into their lines, and many of whom in the confusion of the pursuit fell in the indiscriminate slaughter which followed the capture of the town.

The town retaken, the peaceably disposed inhabitants imagined they were immediately to enjoy the repose and



safety denied them for the past month. In this, however, they were very greatly disappointed. The week following the recapture of the town was occupied with courts-martial, before whom seventy-five people were tried at Killala and one hundred and ten at Ballina. Unlike the Wexford courts-martial, the trials of prisoners at Killala were marked on the whole by humanity and discrimination. A few of the neighbouring gentry who had suffered severely in person and property were not unnaturally clamorous for severe measures, but the more lenient disposition of the Bishop, whose evidence at the court-martial was as far as possible favourable to the prisoners, was effectual in mitigating the severity of the sentences. But though the treatment of the more responsible leaders of the rising was upon the whole merciful, the poorer sort were made to suffer severely. Not only did the troops, after the capture of the town, indulge in cruel and often unnecessary slaughter; they also plundered and pillaged the neighbourhood, making but little distinction between the law-abiding citizens and those who had participated in the insurrection. The militia regiments were the principal offenders in this respect, the regular troops as a whole behaving with propriety and discipline. 'Their rapacity,' says the Bishop, 'differed in no respect from that of the rebels, except that they seized on things with somewhat less of ceremony and excuse, and that his Majesty's soldiers were incomparably superior to the Irish traitors in dexterity at stealing.' Whatever had escaped the rapacity of the Irish was now, without even a pretence at payment, carried off by the soldiers. This most culpable disorder proved ultimately very costly to the Government, which, apart from the payment subsequently made to the suffering loyalists for losses caused by the rebels, was obliged to send commissioners to Killala to report on the injuries done by the King's troops; and in March 1799 a large sum had to be paid in discharge of the claims allowed by the Commission.

A still ruder lesson was taught to the wild peasantry of Erris. On the day following the capture of Killala, the rebels were rumoured to be reassembling in force in the



Laggan, a wild district between Lacken and Ballycastle Bays terminating in the promontory of Downpatrick Head. During a fourteen hours' march the troops succeeded in dispersing the remnant of the armed peasantry, fifty or sixty of whom, many of them in their French uniforms, were killed. A few days later a large force marched in three divisions to complete the final reduction of the Laggan and Erris, not returning from the expedition for a week, during which they taught a terrible and enduring lesson to the wretched peasantry, ruining a number of villages and firing many houses. A few of these wild mountaineers, wandering houseless and homeless through the desolated wilderness, continued for a while to give trouble; but upon the whole order was quickly restored.

One pathetic picture remains of this last and terrible chapter in the abortive insurrection in Mayo in the record of the fate of one of the wildest and poorest of the poor and wild villages of the Laggan. Here, where Downpatrick Head stands out against the ocean, is a striking natural curiosity called the Poolnashanthana, a chasm nearly half a mile in length which cuts clean through the headland and from the top of which the clear green water can be seen eighty feet below. Near the bottom of the chasm and along its whole length runs a ledge of rock, bare when the tide is out but covered by many feet of water when it rises. The peasantry returned from the rebellion were busy one October day endeavouring to save the remnant of their neglected harvest, when suddenly the alarm was spread that the troops from Killala were at hand. Well knowing what they had to expect from the terrible Frazer Fencibles, the rebel harvesters, surprised and unable to escape to the mountains, made for the adjacent cliffs, whose rough faces they were used to climbing and with whose caves they were familiar. It was with many of the younger of them a constant diversion to descend to the ledge of rock at the Poolnashanthana. in pursuit of seals or seabirds' nests, to which they could gain access by means of a rope let down from the top of the cliff. It chanced that at the moment of the soldiers' raid the tide

was out, and quickly bethinking themselves that here was a place of safety in which they might find a temporary refuge, they descended to the ledge, the rope being held for them by a young woman, who was to return and release them so soon as the soldiers had withdrawn. Many hours they waited there expecting the moment when the rope would be lowered by their friend. But though the soldiers had retired long ere the tide rose, the woman came not. Terrified by the presence of the military, she had fled to the hills without remembering her charge, or apprising others of the hiding-place of some five-and-twenty stalwart peasants. Night came on, and with it the remorseless tide running high above the level of the ledge; and when morning dawned the villagers looking down into the chasm saw the lifeless corpses of their sons, brothers, and husbands, washing to and fro with the idle plash of the waves in the abyss of Poolnashanthana.

## APPENDIX

The following letter addressed by Bishop Stock to a lady friend just after the reoccupation of Killala by the British troops is an admirable summary of the events detailed by the Bishop with so much spirit in his 'Narrative of what passed at Killala.' It is printed by permission of the present owner of the original, a descendant of the lady to whom it was originally addressed. The concluding sentences of the manuscript, being partly obliterated, are omitted.

Killala : September 29, 1798.

My dear Miss W.,—Your friendly anxiety for us must be gratified, tho' in the midst of distracting occupations. Take our story in brief. On the morning of Monday, the 22nd of August, an army of a thousand French landed from three frigates and surprised the town of Killala; they continued here some days devouring our provisions of every kind and arming above five thousand peasants whom they furnished also with clothing and helmets; they marched next to Ballina and Castlebar, of which towns they made themselves masters after some resistance. Determined to push on as far as he could into the kingdom, the French General drew away on September 1st about two hundred French soldiers, all that remained here

to defend us against the bigotry and rapacity of his Irish allies, leaving us only three French officers for our protection, but by the unwearied exertions however of these humane and brave men, by prudent management on the part of the Protestants, and above all by the Invisible interposition of Heaven, we continued alive for the space of three weeks, though expecting almost hourly some aggression on our lives and property; the last ten days were particularly threatening. From the moment when it was certainly known that the French and Irish army was defeated, nothing was heard but clamours for the French officers here to arrest all the Protestants and keep them in the Cathedral as hostages for the security of such as should be taken by the English; no way at last remained to avert the storm but the measures proposed by me and with difficulty consented to by the Rebels—that of sending away two ambassadors to Castlebar, Dean Thompson and one Maguire, a Catholic, to request of General Trench humane treatment of his prisoners, as he valued the safety of the Protestants of Killala; two good effects were produced by the embassy, the delay amused the Rebels, and the General was made sensible of the necessity of marching instantly to our relief and that a day's delay would most probably have been fatal to us, as the rebels were positively determined on the morning of Sunday last the 23rd instant to attack both the Protestants and their protectors the French officers before night, and to try whether they could not overpower the house especially, where we had a score of carbines well loaded for receiving them; they were several hundreds in number and we were not above twenty capable of fighting, yet we had very good hopes of success though the house was crowded with women and children. While we were looking on one another with countenances of people bent on mutual destruction, at three o'clock in the afternoon the English army under General Trench appeared on the hills at both ends of the town and in about twenty minutes put to the rout an army of Rebels who showed they did not want courage to do mischief if they had known how. The action passed so nearly under our windows that twelve slugs from a carbine made a riddle of one of the windows of this library whence I am writing to you, and one of the slugs wounded in the forehead (but not dangerously) Mr. Fortescue, member for the County of Louth, who has been three weeks here a prisoner. Think what we felt when we saw the Rebels pursued into the town by a body of cavalry, the Roxburghe Fencibles, in the thick of whom we discerned my boy Arthur Stock sword in hand, who had been sent to Castlebar three weeks before as an hostage for

the safety of our French Commandant, Charost, and had never till then been able to give or receive news. Saturday night on the march he was forced by wet to strip to the skin and take his rest on a heap of straw, but he is now very well, as are we all, thanks to God, in spite of multiplied distress and danger. The rest of the dismal tale, the carnage and destruction of property, the apparent danger of famine, the grievances we yet suffer by the necessary and unnecessary expenditure of an army of two thousand men: these are details which I must leave to your imagination to supply, for indeed I was never more completely stupefied with employment than I am at this moment, when I have a whole staff of officers to entertain from morning to night and near four-score persons to feed daily. A bullock of six cwt. was the amount of our consumption the last two days. All my stock within doors is long past and gone. My house is converted into a barrack, my offices into a guard-room and gaol for more than prisoners, my cellar is emptied, and my furniture destroyed. I have not a horse, bullock, or sheep remaining; many of my tenants are killed or hanged.

J. KILLALLA.





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<sup>1</sup> This narrative, which is now in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, describes the experiences of a Protestant clergyman during the first ten days of the invasion, and fully corroborates in all material particulars the narrative of Bishop Stock.

# INDEX

- ABBOT (Lord Colchester), at variance with Lord Clare, 136, 137  
 Abercrombie, Sir Ralph, 223  
 Act of Union, the. *See* Union  
 Addington administration, 203  
 Ameil, commander of the 'Anacreon' French expeditionary force, 324; his report of Napper Tandy's proceedings, 324, 325  
 American colonies, the, influence of their achievement of independence upon England's policy to Ireland, 8  
 American Irish, 194  
 Annaghmore, Defenders' camp at, 51  
 Antrim, battle of, 46; French descent upon the coast of, 164  
 Ardouin (French officer), at Castlebar, 291; report of number of Humbert's surrendered force, 318  
 Argyll, Duchess of (Mary Bellenden), 61  
 Armagh, religious animosities in, 49; in the hands of rival mobs, 51; a plague to Wolfe Tone, 52  
 Arran, Napper Tandy at, 324  
 Ashbourne, Lord, quoted, 126, 138, 139 *n.*, 210  
  
 'BACK-LANE Parliament,' the, 211, 239, 299  
 Ballina, seditious meetings at, 265, 272; Presbyterians imprisoned at, 332; courts-martial at, 337  
 Ballinamuck, battle of, 315, 316  
 Ballyscullion, 72, 91  
 Bar, the Irish, reasons for opposition to the Union, 20  
 Barretts, the (father and son), join Humbert's force, 281  
 Barrington, Sir Jonah, 38, 136, 191; on Sir Boyle Roche, 299  
 Belfast, the White Linen Hall, 1-3; endorses action of Volunteers at Dungannon, 3; 'Historical Col-  
 tions, Joy's,' 4 *n.*, 42 *n.*; in habitants arm, 26; the Koran of Blefescu, 35; loyalty, 35, 36; United Irishmen object to include Catholics in reforms, 41, 42; alliance of revolutionary politicians with lower orders, 44; Regiment of National Volunteers, 45; 'Defenders,' 45; dread of a French invasion, 45; collapse of the United Irish movement, 54; raising of Volunteers, 55, 164; celebration of the anniversary of the French Revolution, 166; 'Belfast News-letter,' quoted, 3  
 Bellew, General Matthew, in command of the Irish recruits in Humbert's force, 280, 281  
 Bentham, cited, 53; on the Earl-Bishop, 83; on the Volunteer movement, 85 *n.*  
 Beresford, John, head of the Irish Revenue, 73, 109; reasons for not giving the Chancellorship to an Irishman, 117 *n.*; threatened with dismissal from his post in the Revenue, 128  
 Beresford, Marcus, friendship for Wolfe Tone, 132  
 Blake, Mr., of Galway, joins Humbert, 299; head of insurgent Irish at Castlebar, 290; defeated by Colonel Crauford at Ballinrobe, 303; hanged at Ballinamuck, 316  
 Bompard, Admiral, his fleet for the invasion of Ireland, 255, 256; leaves Brest for Ireland, 319; menaced by a large English fleet, and puts back to port, 320; defeated by Warren, 321  
 Borough-owners, the, and the Union, 18, 19  
 Boswell, James, correspondence with Lord Bristol, 86 *n.*  
 Boudet, Captain, at Killala, 330  
 Bristol, Frederick Hervey, Earl of,

- Bishop of Derry, 58; character, 59; parentage, 60, 61, 62; as a student, 65; college acquaintance with Gray, 65; enters the Church, 65; author of the 'Origin of Cards,' 66 *n.*; passion for travel, 67; visits Vesuvius and Etna, 67; applications for promotion, 67, 68; nominated to the bishopric of Cloyne, 68, 69; friendship with Lord Shelburne, 69, 71; appointed to the see of Derry, 71; active discharge of episcopal duties, 72, 73; freedom of Londonderry conferred upon him, 73; ardour for church architecture and decoration, 73; friendliness with Catholics and Dissenters, 74; his clerical festivities, 74; benevolence, 75; in favour of abolition of tithes, 76; interested in the Catholic priesthood, 76, 77; views of England's Irish policy, 77, 78, 79; admiration of Chatham, 80; defends the Presbyterians, 81; letter to Arthur Young, 81; political views shared by Shelburne, 81; at the National Convention of the Volunteers in Dublin, 82 *n.*, 83, 86; succeeds to the earldom of Bristol, 82; intimacy with Arthur Young, 83; his political attitude regarded with suspicion by the Government, 83, 84-86; advocates the union of the two legislatures, 86; extravagance of language and wild eccentricities, 86, 87, 88, 89; alliance with fighting Fitzgerald, 88; popularity in Derry, 88, 89; altered relations with his wife and family, 90; prolonged absences abroad, 90; his answer to episcopal remonstrances, 91; money spent on Ballyscullion and Ickworth, 91; schemes for family aggrandisement, 92; encouragement of art, 92, 93; scandals connected with his closing years on the Continent, 93, 94, 95; friendship with Sir W. Hamilton, 93; his social gifts and accomplishments, 95; death at Albano, 95; letters to Sir John Strange, 96-98; letter relating to, 98; to Lady Hamilton, 99; inscription on the obelisk at Ickworth, 100; his introduction of the Catholic claims the cause of the dissolution of the Volunteer Convention, 165
- Bristol, George, Earl of, brother of the Earl-Bishop, Viceroy of Ireland, 68; bequest to the Bishop, 68
- Bristol, Lady, wife of the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 65, 90
- Brougham, Lord, on Castlereagh, 179, 181, 182; on Plunket, 197, 200, 201
- Browne, Hon. Denis, 262, 297; on the condition of Mayo, 264
- Buckinghamshire, Lord (Irish Viceroy), 108, 109, 110; supports Clare's claims to the Chancellorship, 119, 120, 121
- Bulwer Lytton, Sir Edward, on Plunket, 200, 222
- Buonaparte, Napoleon, his aid sought by the Irish revolutionaries, 253; discourages a French invasion of Ireland, 253, 254
- Burgh, Walter Hussey, 20, 28, 108; death of, 141
- Burke, Edmund, 84; on Lord Clare's father, 104
- Bushe, Charles Kendal, 198, 202, 214
- Butler, Sir Toby, 231
- Butt, Isaac, on Orangeism, 47 *n.*
- CAMDEN, Lord (Viceroy of Ireland), 120, 121, 128, 129, 185, 224
- Carnot, member of the French Directory, aids the Irish national cause, 252, 253, 258
- Carrickfergus, capture of, 26; landing of Thurot at, 164
- Castlebar, in the French invasion, situation, 289; British position, 289; their defeat, 291; 'Races,' 293; excesses of Humbert's Irish contingent, 296; property of the townsfolk protected by the French, 301; reoccupied by Crauford, 306; looted by peasantry, 306; British occupation, 333; treatment of Irish prisoners, 334
- Castlereagh (Robert Stewart), Lord, 18; at the Northern Whig Club, 36; memoirs, 38; offends Clare, 136; eulogises his secretary Knox, 161; at McNevin's examination, 175; at College Green and at Westminster, 177; reasons for his comparative failure, 178, 179; a truer estimate of his character, 180; still execrated in Ireland, 180, 181; steady friend of Catholic emancipation, 182; Grattan's dying vindication of him, 182; early career, 183; in his boyhood, 184; development of his opinions, 185; letter to Lord Camden on the French Revolution, 186; and on



- Irish affairs, 186, 187; violence of Plunket's attacks upon him, 206; action on Humbert's invasion, 282
- Catholic Relief Act (Ireland) of 1793, 15
- Cavan, Lord, 74; letter on the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 98
- Charlemont, Lord, his political aims, 9; reasons for his opposing the Union, 19, 20; Grattan enters Parliament as his nominee, 27; opponent of Catholic claims, 27; waives principles to Plunket's pertinacity, 27; commander-in-chief of the army in Ulster, 29; his views on concessions to the Roman Catholics, 29; dissatisfied with the Constitution of 1782, 30; scouts the idea of including Catholics in the benefits of reforms, 31; Mr. Jephson's letter on Orangeism, 52; accuses the Earl-Bishop of Derry of deism, 66; on the Earl-Bishop, 83, 84, 87, 88; on Lord Clare, 124; his appeal to Ulstermen, 165; influence at the Volunteer Convention, 204; offers Plunket a seat for Charlemont, 204; change of views on emancipation, 205; on Sir Boyle Roche, 230
- Charost, M., the French commandant at Killala, 326; receives news of the French victory at Castlebar, 326; invites inhabitants of Killala to arm against lawless men and robbery, 328; his scheme of civil government, 329; career, 330; religious views, 330; protects the Presbyterian weavers, 332; anxious to surrender after Ballinamuck, 333; arrests O'Donel, leader of pikemen, 333; protects the Protestants, 333, 334; sends embassy to Castlebar, 334; surrenders to General Trench, 336
- Chatham, Earl of, stops Viceregal absenteeism, 70, 80
- Chérin, General, 255, 256
- Chesterfield, Lord, quoted, on Lady Hervey, 62
- Clare, Earl of (John Fitzgibbon), 10, 18; urges upon Pitt the necessity for a Union, 23, 24; correspondence with George III. on Catholic emancipation, 25; orders the destruction of his correspondence, 38; on the Volunteer Convention, 83; influence on Irish history, 101; contemporary opinion of him, 103; modern appreciation of him, 103, 104; parentage, 104; Grattan's schoolfellow and rival, 105; habits as a young man, 105; at the Bar, 106; returned to the Irish Parliament, 106; acquires the friendship of John Beresford, 108; his support sought for by the Irish Government, 109; intimate friendship with Chief Secretary Eden, 110; action with regard to Grattan's Declaration of Right, 111; loses his seat for the University, 111; made Attorney-General, 110, 111, 115, 141; relations with the popular party, 113; his view of Ireland's connection with Great Britain, 114; disruption of his friendship with Grattan, 114; fearless action in quelling a dangerous meeting, 116 *n.*; duel with Curran, 116, 143; his account of the affair with Curran, 117 *n.*; championed by the Duke of Rutland, 118; his claims to the Chancellorship supported by Buckingham, 119, 121; Mornington favours his candidature, 120; nicknamed FitzPetulant, 120; supports Pitt on the Regency question, 120; Thurlow's opposition to his chancellorship, 121; appointed Chancellor, 121; popularity of his appointment, 122; his judicial judgments, 123, 124; attacked by and attacks the Whig Club, 124; fights the United Irish agitation, 125; the powers of the Irish Government concentrated in him, 125; dismissal sought for, 127, 144; share in the recall of Lord Fitz-William, 127, 128; disapproves of the Grattan Parliament, 129; speech on Grattan's resolution, 130; relations with Wolfe Tone, 130, 131; designates Tone as the pivot of the conspiracy of the United Irishmen, 132; Tone's confession of treason in his possession, 133; fixed hostility to Catholic emancipation, 133, 139; maintains the doctrine of Protestant ascendancy, 134; memorandum on Grattan's Catholic Relief Bill, 135; reported as regretting the Union, 136; at variance with Abbot, 136, 137; riding accident, 137; dies in Dublin, 138; private character, 138, 140; imperious temperament, 139; signs of unpopularity at his funeral, 139 *n.*; Lord Stanley of Alderley's appreciation, 140; letters to Eden, 141-153; on Wolfe Tone, 172

- Cloyne, bishopric of, 68, 69; 'Records of,' Brady's, 71
- Cobbett, William, Plunket gains damages from him for libel, 208
- Cole, William (antiquary), on Lady Hervey, 63; on the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 65
- Collooney, skirmish between Vereker and Humbert at, 307
- Connaught, its state at the time of Humbert's invasion, 261 *et seq.*; effects of the influx of Catholic peasantry from Armagh and Tyrone, 262-264; the Yeomanry movement in, 264, 266; assumption of loyalty by the Catholics, 266; the United Irish organisation, 266; unchecked religious intolerance, 266; distrust of the invasion, 267; Humbert's force landed at Killala, 271; French money drafts for stores, 278; Mayo and Sligo thinly garrisoned, 283; battle of Castlebar, 291; civil administration established by Humbert, 298; peasantry irresponsible to discipline, 299; surrender of Humbert to Cornwallis, 315
- Conroy, Father, priest of Addergoole, supplies Humbert with information, 287, 288
- Cork, loyalty of the Roman Catholics of, 168
- Cornwallis, Lord, 18; Pitt's instructions to, in negotiating the Union, 24, 25; memoirs, 38; on Castle-reagh, 177; discourages Orangeism, 225; redistribution of military forces in Ireland, 232; takes the field against Humbert, 283; Hutchinson's report to him on Castlebar, 286; reprimands him for his defeat, 293; but refuses to accept his resignation, 294; represses military license, 302; operations in protection of Sligo and the Shannon, 303, 304; endeavours to intercept Humbert at Granard, 313; Humbert surrenders to him at Ballinamuck, 315, 316; hangs a number of the rebels as an example, 317; his General Order congratulating his troops, 318; cited, 136, 152, 224
- Cortez, General, commander of the troops of Savary's second invasion, 321, 322
- Cottingham, Major, defeats rebels at Granard, 310, 311
- Crauford, Colonel, defeats Blake at Ballinrobe, 303; reoccupies Castlebar and follows up Humbert, 306, 313; attacks Humbert at Ballinamuck, 315
- Croker, Crofton, cited, on Ulster sentiment, 26 *n.*
- Croker, John Wilson, on the Catholic cause, 209, 211; on Plunket, 222
- Curran, John Philpot, 20; his duel with Lord Clare, 116; insults to Clare, 117; enmity to Sir Boyle Roche, 233; Sir Boyle Roche's reply to a speech of his, 234
- DAUNT, O'Neill, on Thomas Steele, 245, 248
- Davis, Thomas, his account of the United Irishmen, 40 *n.*; on Wolfe Tone, 157
- Declaration of Right, the, 111, 115
- Declaratory Act, the, 3
- Defenderism, 262, 263, 266
- Defenders, the, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 195
- Delaney, Mrs., cited, 13
- Denniston, Alexander and Hans, heads of the peasant rebellion in Longford, 310; defeated by Cottingham, 311
- De Quincey, at the close of the Grattan Parliament, 18
- Devonshire, Elizabeth, Duchess of (Lady Elizabeth Foster), 59
- Diamond, Battle of the, 47 *n.*, 49, 50, 51, 52, 262
- Dickey, James, executed, 46
- Dickson, Rev. W. S., on Castlereagh, 184
- Directory, French, aids the Irish cause, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257
- Dissenters, Northern, and the Catholic franchise, 31
- Downhill, 72, 74
- Downshire, Lord, 153, 184
- Drennan, Dr. William, United Irishman, 55
- Dublin, 12, 13, 14
- Duigenan, Patrick, 210; chief exponent of Irish Protestant opinion, 215; Professor of Civil Law in Dublin University, 215; his 'Lachrymæ Academicæ,' 216; henchman of Lord Clare, 216; placed by Wellington in the Irish Privy Council, 216; death, 217
- Dungannon, meeting of Ulster Volunteers at, 3; Convention, 27, 28, 30, 31
- EDEN, William (first Lord Auckland), 110, 112; remonstrates with Clare

- on his quarrel with Curran, 117; letters from Lord Clare to, 141-153
- Edgeworth, Miss, on French disappointment with Irish allies, 300; her account of the battlefield of Ballinamuck, 316
- Edgeworth, Richard Lovell, on Irish bulls, 228
- Elliot, Colonel, at Killala, 335
- Elliot, Mr., forwards the body of the Earl-Bishop to England, 94
- Ellison, Dr., Rector of Castlebar, wounded at Killala, 272, 273; apprises Crauford of Humbert's evacuation of Castlebar, 306; cited, 297, 298, 301, 327
- Emmet, Robert, 52; rising of, 195; trial of, 207
- Emmet, Thomas Addis, 38; on Wolfe Tone, 133; letter to Thomas Russell, 153, 154; quoted, 167; examined by the Lords Committee on the Irish rebellion, 173, 174, 193
- Erris, barony of, 268; suppression of rebel peasantry in, 338
- Erskine, Cardinal, 93
- FINGALL, Lord, 193, 211
- Fitzgerald, George Robert (fighting Fitzgerald), at the Volunteer Convention, 82 *n.*, 88; alliance with the Earl-Bishop, 88
- Fitzgibbon, Ion, 105
- Fitzgibbon, John (Lord Clare's father), 104, 108, 109
- Fitzgibbon, John. *See* Lord Clare
- Fitzmaurice, Lord Edmund, quoted, 81
- Fitzwilliam, Lord, 25, 109, 126, 127, 128, 129, 135, 171, 210
- Flaxman, (the sculptor), 92
- Flood, Henry, 8, 20; breaks with Grattan, 84; pushes Irish reform, 85, 112; Reform Bill, 115, 165
- Fontaine, L. O., on Humbert's delay at Cloone, 314
- Fortescue, Mr., member for Louth, prisoner of the French at Killala, 332, 340
- Fortescue, Mr. (clergyman), killed in the French invasion, 275
- Foster, John, Speaker of the Irish House, 105
- Fox, Charles James, on the Irish Volunteers, 16, 129 *n.*; alliance with Grattan, 85; distrust of Shelburne, 85; letter to Northington on the Volunteers, 85 *n.*; views on Irish policy, 112, 113 *n.*, 196; quoted, 135, 136
- France, her designs on Ireland, 96, 97; invasion of Ireland, 250 *et seq.*
- Franchise, the, with limitations, granted to Catholics, 21
- Frankland, Sir Thomas, 233
- Frazer Fencibles, gallantry of the, at Castlebar, 289, 291, 293, 306; at Killala, 335
- Frederick William II. of Prussia, 92, 93
- French invasion of Ireland in 1798, 250 *et seq.*
- French Revolution, its action upon popular sentiment in North Ireland, 34, 35, 165, 166
- Froude, on the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 58, 83; on Lord Clare, 103, 105 *n.*; on the Irish rebellion, 158
- GAY (the poet), on Lady Hervey, 62
- George III., his rooted objection to Catholic emancipation, 25
- George IV., his visit to Ireland and its results, 219; hostility to Plunket, 221
- Giant's Causeway, 67
- Gibbon, Edward, his admiration for Lady Elizabeth Foster, 91
- Goethe, his conversation with the Earl-Bishop, 95
- Gordon, Rev. James, on the Irish Rebellion, 159
- Granard, Major Cottingham defeats rebels at, 311; Humbert and Cornwallis both make for, 314
- Grattan, Henry, enters Parliament as Lord Charlemont's nominee, 27; alliance with Fox, 85; school and college rivalry with Lord Clare, 105; approves of Clare's appointment as Attorney-General, 112; his Declaration of Right, 111; pamphlet, which dissevered his friendship with Lord Clare, 115, 125; approves of Clare's action in dissolving a dangerous meeting, 116; good-tempered criticism of Clare, 120; his Catholic Relief Bill, 135; dying vindication of Castlereagh, 182; aided by the Protestant squirearchy, 193; awaits the fulfilment of Pitt's Irish policy, 196; Plunket's adherence to him, 203
- Grattan Parliament, the, its independence secured by aid of Ulster, 5, 26; in danger owing to admission of Catholics to franchise, 5, 15; not

- a representative institution, 7; a toy presented to Irish patriots, 8; friendly to English ascendancy, 8, 9; attitude on Irish trade, 9; legislative machinery worked from England, 10; reasons for its hold on the affections of the people, 10, 11; material benefits it brought to Dublin, 11; change of character as a result of the Relief Act of 1793, 15; development of principles antagonistic to imperial unity, 16; borough-mongers opposed to the Union, 17; oratory in, 20; the Bar opposed to the Union, 20; radical change in the electorate, 21; government officials not responsible to, 22; Sir John Orde's commercial resolutions, 22; demands of the Roman Catholics, 23; Pitt's views of the evils of emancipation in, 24; its Protestantism, 25; demands for reforms in, 30, 31; Protestant in its mandate, 32; its doing away with urged by Lord Clare, 129
- Gray, Thomas (the poet), 65, 68
- Gregory, Lady, quoted, 190, 196
- Gregory, Rt. Hon. William, his diary quoted, 198
- Grenville administration, its denial of Catholic claims, 198, 199
- Grenville, Lord, 199 *n.*
- Grenville, William, 119, 120
- Greville, on Castlereagh, 179
- Gribayédoff, on Musgrave's Memoirs, 159
- Griffith, R., on Plunket, 205 *n.*
- HAMILTON, Lady Emma, her relations with the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 93, 94; letter to her from him, 99
- Hamilton, Sackville, 147, 148
- Hamilton, Sir William, 59, 67, 77, 86 *n.*, 92; friendship with the Earl-Bishop, 93; marriage with Emma, 94
- Hardy, General, Bruix's despatch to him, 255, 256; delayed at Brest by want of money, 257; his army on Bompard's fleet, 319, 321; offers to go with a small force from Rochefort, 320
- Harvey, Bagenal, 189
- Harwood, Mr., his account of the Rebellion, 169
- 'Hearts of Oak,' 163, 195
- 'Hearts of Steel,' 163
- Heron, Sir Richard, 26, 110
- Hervey, Augustus, 3rd Earl of Bristol, 64, 68
- Hervey, Carr, Lord (uncle of the Bishop of Derry), 61
- Hervey, Elizabeth (Earl-Bishop's daughter), 90, 92
- Hervey, Frederick. *See* Bristol
- Hervey, George, 2nd Earl of Bristol, 64
- Hervey, John, Lord (father of the Bishop of Derry), 60
- Hervey, Lady Mary (Mary Lepel), mother of the Bishop of Derry, 61, 62; her love for the Continent, 63; letters to Rev. E. Morris, 63, her estimate of Charles Townshend, 63 *n.*
- Hervey, Louisa (Lady Liverpool), 90
- Hervey, William, 64
- Hobart (Irish Secretary), 121
- Hoche, General, espouses the Irish cause, 168, 252; death, 253
- Holland, Lord, on Bishop Stock, 270
- Humbert, General Jean Joseph Amable, leads the French invasion of Ireland, 257; sketch of his early career, 257, 258; personality, 258; character of the force under him, 259; Irishmen on his staff, 260, 261; selects Killala as the landing place, 261, 267, 271; captures Killala, and its Bishop, 272, 273; overture to Bishop Stock, 274; threatens the Bishop with deportation, 274; advances on Ballina, 275, 281; grandiloquent proclamation, 276; distributes arms and uniforms to the peasantry, 278; disappointed with the Irish levies, 278, 279; contempt of his troops for the blind faith of Catholic peasantry, 278, 280; strength of his Irish contingent, 281; advance on Castlebar by a mountain track, 287; defeats the English at Castlebar, 291; joined by Longford and Kilkenny Militias, 292; his despatch to the Directory, 292; hazards of his attack on Castlebar, 294; master of Mayo, 295; inspires the peasantry of Mayo with a belief in his invincibility, 295; schemes for future action, 295; unsupported by his Government, 296; excesses of his Irish supporters after Castlebar, 297; establishes civil administration for Connaught, 298; efforts to discipline the Irish recruits, 299; two Irish captains shot by him for mutiny, 300; protects the town-folk's property at Castlebar, 301; consideration shown to Ellison,



- 301; evacuation of Castlebar, 304; marches on Sligo, 305; sends prisoners to Cornwallis, 306; attacked by Vereker at Collooney, 307; relinquishes the idea of reaching Sligo, 309; abandons cannon, 313; makes for Grauard, 313; his fatal delay at Cloone, 314; closely followed by the English troops, 314; arrives at Ballinamuck, 315; surrenders at discretion, 315; his despatch to the French Directory, 319
- Hutchinson, Major-General (second Lord Donoughmore), in command of Connaught, 283, 284; moves on Castlebar against Humbert, 285; force at his disposal, 285, 286; defeated by the French, 291-293; censured by Cornwallis, 294; his resignation not accepted, 294; disaffection of his troops, 294
- Hutchinson, Provost Hely, 202, 203, 215, 216
- Hutchinson, Richard Hely, son of Provost, unseated, 106
- ICKWORTH, Earl-Bishop of Derry's residence, 72, 83, 89, 90, 91; inscription to Earl-Bishop on the obelisk, 100
- Ireland, conceded an independent legislature (1783), 3; French invasion of (1798), 250 *et seq.*
- Irish rebellion of 1798, the, 16, 22, 149, 150, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 162, 163, 169, 205, 223 *et seq.*, 250 *et seq.*
- JOBITT, Captain, on Hutchinson's forces at Castlebar, 286
- Johnson, Bishop, of Cloyne, 69
- Johnson, Dr. Samuel, on the Herveys, 61
- Joy, Henry (Solicitor-General), 220
- KAUFFMAN, Angelica, memorials in Dublin, 15
- Kenmare, Lord, 232, 238
- Keogh, John, 38, 44; acceptance of modified Catholic claims, 167; his agitation loyal to the Constitution, 193; record, 211; first plebeian leader of the Irish Catholics, 212; Wolfe Tone's adviser and associate, 212; loyally accepts the Union, 212; advocates emancipation, 212; repudiated by O'Connell, 212
- Killala, county Mayo, traditions, 268; diocese, 268; bishops, 269; amalgamation of its see with Tuam, 269; capture by the French, 272; Humbert's garrison, 281; condition of, after the departure of the French garrison, 328; a scheme of civil government, 329; regulation of the meat supply at, 329; outrages by the Irish recruits, 332, 333; pillaged by insurgents, 334; rebel defence, 335; occupied by General French, 336; courts-martial at, 337
- Kilmaine, General, 255, 256
- Kilwarden, Lord, 138
- Kirkwood, Captain, of the Yeomanry, his defence of Killala, 271; placed by the French on parole, 274; killed at Killala, 336
- Knox, Alexander, on the Irish Rebellion, 160; 'Thoughts on the Will of the People,' 161; 'Essays on the Political Circumstances of Ireland,' 161, 167; correspondence with Bishop Jebb, 161; exposure of the real objects of the United Irishmen, 176
- LAKE, General, 283, 235; defeated at Castlebar, 294; after Castlebar, 303, 304; at Cloone, the composition of his force, 314; his return of Humbert's force on surrender, 318
- La Vendée, 258
- Lecky, W. E. H., quoted, on the Union, 17; on the Constitution of 1782, 22; on the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 58, 83; on Lord Clare, 103; on Clare's speeches in the Regency debates, 134; on the Irish rebellion, 158, 168, 251; quoted, 190
- Leinster, Duke of, 9, 124
- Leinster Volunteers, opposed to concessions to Catholics, 31
- Lewens, Edward, appeals for French aid, 252, 253, 254
- Lichtenau, Countess von, 92, 93
- Lifford, Lord, 118, 119, 120
- Lilburne, Richard, on Orangeism, 47 *n.*
- Limerick, Treaty of, 70
- Liverpool administration, the, 199, 219
- Liverpool, Lord, Irish policy of, 197
- Londonderry, presents the freedom of the city to the Earl-Bishop, 73; its address to him, 88



- Longford, Lord, in command at Granard, 310, 312
- Longford Militia, the, at Castlebar, 292, 294
- Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland (1767), change in the conditions under which it was held, 14; nature of office, 22
- Loughborough, Lord, 136
- Loughgall, religious fracas at, 51
- Lysaght, Edward, on Lord Clare, 139 *n.*
- MacCRACKEN, Henry Joy, 43, 54
- Macdonnell, Colonel, joins Humbert, 299; escape at Ballinamuck, 316
- Mackintosh, Sir James, on Plunket, 197
- MacNevin, William, cited, 38, 42, 169, 189; questioned on the causes of the Irish Rebellion, 175; evidence before Lord Clare, 193
- Madden, Dr. Richard, his history of the United Irishmen movement, 6, 38, 169
- Maddyn, Owen, his 'Chiefs of Parties,' quoted, 160
- Maguire, Roger, messenger from Charost to Castlebar, 334, 340
- Malone, Edmund, on Ion Fitzgibbon, 105
- Marche, Countess de la, 92
- Mason, Rev. William, friend of Gray, 65; on the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 69 *n.*, 71 *n.*
- Mayo, events in connection with the French invasion, 251 *et seq.*, 295
- Middleton, Dr. Conyers, 66
- Moir, Earl of, opposed to enfranchisement of Catholics, 30; his arraignment of the Irish Government, 130
- Montagu, Lady Mary, 61
- Montgomery, Barbara, 109
- Moore, John, president of the provisional government of Connaught established by Humbert, 298, 299
- Moore, Thomas, on Castlereagh, 179, 181; cited, 191
- Mornington, Earl of (Marquess Wellesley), 120
- Morris, Rev. Edmund, 63, 64
- Mountjoy, Lord, 151
- Multifarragh, the Presbyterians of, 263
- Musgrave, Sir Richard, on the Irish Rebellion, 159; on the Catholics of Mayo, 264
- NELIGAN, Dr., applauds the loyalty of Mayo, 265
- Nelson, Admiral Lord, and Lady Hamilton, 93, 95
- Newcome, Archbishop, 270
- Newenham, Sir Edward, on the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 79 *n.*, 86 *n.*
- New Ross, battle of, 250
- Northern Whig Club, the, 36
- Northington, Lord, cited, 83, 112, 115, 141; Fox's letter to him on the Volunteers, 85 *n.*; and on Irish policy, 113 *n.*; employment of Sir Boyle Roche at the Volunteer Convention of 1783, 238
- Nugent, Major-General, 304, 307
- O'BRIEN, William Smith, 21; duel with Thomas Steele, 245
- O'Connell, Daniel, cited, 21, 191, 192, 200; on Castlereagh, 181; rejoices at the failure of Plunket's bill, 219; repudiates Keogh, 212; opposes the re-election of Vesey Fitzgerald, 242; Steele's devotion to his cause, 242 *et seq.*; opposed at the Clare election by Smith O'Brien, 245; cause of his one estrangement from Steele, 247
- O'Connell, Sir James (brother of the Liberator), on Thomas Steele, 245
- O'Connell, John (son of the Liberator), his eulogy of Steele, 247
- O'Keon, Henry, interpreter on Humbert's staff, career of, 260, 261; restrains Catholic excesses, 297; drills Humbert's Irish recruits, 299; with Charost at Killala, 330; prisoner to Trench, 336
- Orange Lodge of Freemasons, Belfast, 2
- Orangeism, 46-48, 52, 263, 264
- Orde, Sir John, his commercial resolutions, 22; cited, 118, 147, 148
- PAINE's 'Rights of Man,' 35
- Pakenham, General, at Ballinamuck, 315
- Palmer, Sir John, his seat at Castle Lacken plundered, 328
- Parliament House, Dublin, 12
- Parnell, Sir Henry, quoted, 168
- Parsons, Sir Lawrence. *See* Lord Rosse
- Paterson, Lord Chief Justice, 144
- Peel, Sir Robert, his Emancipation Act, 50 *n.*; abolishes forty-shilling freeholders, 193; time occupied by

- him in going to Ireland, 194; on Plunket, 197; on Dr. Duigenan, 217 *n.*
- Peep of Day Boys, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52 *n.*, 262
- Pelham, Chief Secretary of Ireland, 76, 86, 142; letter from Lord Cavan, 98
- Pery, Edmund Sexton, Viscount Pery, Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, 77, 78 *n.*, 86
- Pitt, William, convinced of the necessity for a Union after passing of the Relief Act, 15, 16; methods of bringing it about, 18, 19; Lord Clare's pressure, 23, 24; views on Catholic emancipation, 24; instructions to Lord Cornwallis, 24, 25; on the political attitude of the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 84, 87; appoints Lord Clare Irish Chancellor, 121; recalls Lord Fitzwilliam, 126, 128; Clare his trusted adviser, 128, 129; his Irish policy, 196
- Plunket, William Conyngham, 20, 101; reasons for his limited popularity, 198; oratorical fame, 198, 199; subordinate place in the annals of politics, 199; failure to win the affections of his countrymen, 199; in the Grenville administration, 198; joins the Liverpool ministry, 199, 200; conflict with O'Connell, 200; magnitude of his services, 200; school and college life, 202; a Whig throughout his career, 203; called to the Irish Bar, 203; an adherent of Grattan, 203; friendship for Wolfe Tone, 203; enters the Irish Parliament as member for Charlemont, 204, 225; impression made by him, 205; attitude towards public affairs, 205; his Union speeches, 206; attacks on Castlereagh, 206; after the Union turns from politics to the Bar, 207; prosecuting counsel against Emmet, 207; obtains damages from Cobbett for libel, 208; parliamentary changes, 208; takes from the dying Grattan the formal leadership of the Catholic cause, 217; presents the petition of the Catholic body, 218; Sheil's acknowledgment of services, 218; his Bill rejected by the Lords, 219; end of his popularity, 221; raised to the peerage, 221; acquires the Irish Chancellorship, 221; summary of his character and achievements, 222; his letter on the state of Ireland, 223 *et seq.*
- Pococke, Bishop, 268
- Ponson, French officer, at Killala, 331
- Ponsonby, George, 131, 209, 210, 211
- Poolnashanthana, the tragedy of, 338
- Pope, his savage portrait of Sporus (Lord Hervey), 60
- Portarlington, Lord, with Trench at Ballina, 334
- Porter, Major, in command at Cavan, 310; defeats the rebels at Wilson's Hospital, 312
- Porter, Rev. Classon, his account of the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 74
- Portland, Duke of, 113 *n.*, 135, 142
- Poyning's Law, 111, 114
- Presbyterians of Ulster, action of the French Revolution upon, 34; objects of the United Irish Society, 37; defended by the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 81; their address to him, 88
- RADCLIFFE, Rev. Mr., chaplain of Wilson's Hospital, 311
- Rathmore, Lord, his biography of Plunket, 201, 222
- Ribbonism, a counterblast to Orangeism, 195
- Roche, Sir Boyle, and his bulls, 228, 229, 230; loyalty of his family, 231; his military career, 232; member of the Irish Parliament, 232; receives, with other honours, a baronetcy, 232; marriage to Sir Thomas Frankland's daughter, 233; enmity to Curran, 233; reputation as a humourist, 233; speech levelled at Curran, 234; humorously counters Grattan's passionate declamation, 235; answer to a petition from Belfast Dissenters on behalf of Catholics, 235; character of his oratory, 236; his excellent memory, 236; suggestion as to the reading of tedious documents, 237; specimens of his parliamentary bulls, 237; personal courage, 237; intervention in the Volunteer Convention, 238; supporter of the Franchise Bill, 239; kindness of his disposition, 239
- Roden, Lord, his 'Foxhunters' at Castlebar, 292; at Ballinamuck, 316
- Roman Catholics, admission to the franchise, 21; devoted to national

- independence, 21; concessions to, 30, 31, 32; allied with the Presbyterians against English rule, 41, 43; enfranchisement of, 43; 'Defenders,' 45; early struggles for emancipation, 192, 193, 195, 196; apathy of the poor towards emancipation, 193; largely concerned in the rebellion, 250 *et seq.*
- Rosebery, Lord, quoted, 126, 127
- Rosse, Lord (Laurence Parsons), 202, 203
- Rowan, Archibald Hamilton, 38
- Russell, Lord John, on Castlereagh, 177; on Plunket, 197, 200
- Russell, Thomas, partisan of Wolfe Tone, 43, 52, 133; T. A. Emmet's letter to him, 153
- Rutland, Charles, fourth Duke of (Viceroy of Ireland), 84, 87, 118, 119, 129 *n.*, 165
- SAMPSON, William, United Irish leader, 45
- Sarazin, Humbert's adjutant-general, 259, 271; captures Killala, 272; advances on Ballina, 275; theatrical display over the body of Walsh, 276; at Castlebar, 290, 291, 296; proposes night attack on Lake at Ballaghaderreen, 306; surrenders at Ballinamuck, 315, 316, 317
- Saurin, William, 210; Attorney-General, 213; head of the Irish Bar against the Union, 213; sole reliance of the Irish Government in legal matters, 214; his letter to Peel epitomising Protestant opposition to Catholic claims, 214
- Savary, Admiral, his fleet for the invasion of Ireland, 255; lands Humbert at Killala, 271; his second expedition to Ireland, 319, 320, 321; failure, 322
- Scott, John (Lord Clonmell), 108, 109
- Scott, Sir Walter, on Lord Wellesley's Viceroyalty, 220
- Scullabogue, 20, 266
- Seymour, Rev. Charles, on the French at Killala, 272
- Shannon, Lord, 152
- Sheares, the brothers, 20
- Sheil, Richard Lalor, 191; on emancipation, 218; on Plunket, 221; on Thomas Steele, 242
- Shelburne, Lord, 69; his views on Irish politics, 81; vindicates the Volunteers, 84; favours extensive reforms in Ireland, 84
- Shelley, on Castlereagh, quoted, 181
- Sidmouth, Lord, and Libbonism, 196
- Skelton, invited by the Earl-Bishop of Derry to become his chaplain, 75
- Smith, Sydney, on Irish bulls, 229
- Stanley, Mr. Sergeant, Sir Boyle Roche's use of his manuscript speech, 236
- Stanley of Alderley, first Lord, on Lord Clare, 140
- Steel Boys, the, 195
- Steele, Thomas, education, 242; scientific tastes, 243; fights for the insurgents in the Spanish war of 1821, 243; devotes himself to the cause of O'Connell, 244; attempted suicide, 244; anecdotes of his eccentricity, 245; duel with Smith O'Brien, 245; 'Head Pacificator of Ireland,' 245, 246; horror of agrarian outrage, 246; his only rupture with O'Connell, 247; a 'political Ossian,' 248; extract from a pamphlet by him, 248
- Steele, William, father of Thomas, 242
- Stewart, Charles, third Marquess of Londonderry, 185; letter from Plunket, 206
- Stewart, Robert, first Marquess of Londonderry (father of Lord Castlereagh), 183; friend of Charlemont, 183; his two wives, 183
- Stewart, Robert, the younger. *See* Castlereagh
- Stock, Dr. Joseph, Bishop of Killala, on Humbert, 258; denounces Orangeism, 263; administers the oath of allegiance to Catholics, 266; narrative of the French invasion, 269; character, abilities and career, 269, 270; prisoner of the French at Killala Castle, 272, 273; Humbert's proposal to him, 274; threatened with deportation, 275; Toussaint's admissions to him, 326; his household provided for by the French, 327; valuable property deposited with him, 329; on Ponson, 331; on the outrages of the peasantry, 333, 334; estimate of the Irish slain at recapture of Killala, 336; interposes on behalf of O'Keon, 336; evidence at courts-martial, 337; on the behaviour of the Irish Militia, 337; letter summarising events at Killala, 339, 341
- Strange, Sir John, cited, 67, 68, 76, 77, 86; three letters from the Earl-Bishop, 96, 97, 98

- Swift, Dean, cited, 13
- Swilly, Lough, Warren defeats Bompard in, 321
- TALBOT, Earl (Irish Viceroy), time occupied in travelling from Ireland to England, 194
- Tandy, Napper, National Congress summoned by him, 165; career, 322; head of party opposed to Wolfe Tone, 323; invasion of Ireland in the 'Anaereon,' 323; drunken habits, 323; Ameil's report of him, 324; lands at Arran, 324; decides not to disembark his force, 325; Jonah Barrington's estimate of him, 325
- Taylor, General, 265, 284, 285, 286, 288, 293, 303
- Teeling, Bartholomew, 260; restrains the Catholic mob after Castlebar, 297, 298; drills Humbert's Irish recruits, 299; disappointed with the Connaught peasantry, 300; gallantry at Collooney, 308
- Temple, Lord (Lord-Lieutenant), 232
- Thompson, Dean, on embassy from Charost to Castlebar, 334, 340
- Threshers, the, 195
- Thurlow, Lord, 119, 120, 121
- Thurot, Francis, his invasion of Ireland, 26; lands at Carrickfergus, 164
- Tisdal, Philip, Attorney-General, 106, 108, 215, 216
- Tone, Matthew (brother of Wolfe), 259
- Tone, Theobald Wolfe, 20; on Paine's 'Rights of Man,' 35; founder of the United Irishmen, 37; character of his journals, 39; his hatred of England, 39; before a court-martial in Dublin, 40; aids in the alliance of the Roman Catholic and Protestant dissentients to English rule, 41, 42; difficulties with the United Irishmen, 41; refers to Armagh as a plague, 52; relations with Lord Clare, 130, 131; quarrels with his wife's family, 131; writes for the Whig Club, 131; befriended by Marcus Beresford, 132; confession of treason, 133, 154; on the real objects of the United Irish system, 172, 173; his 'Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,' 173; friendship for Plunket, 203; seeks, as emissary of the Irish 'Directory,' French aid, 252; appeals to Napoleon Buona-parte, 253; his 'peregrination to convert the natives of Connaught,' 262; with Hardy's invading army, 319
- Toussaint, his account of the true object of the French invasion, 326
- Townshend, Lord (Viceroy of Ireland), 14, 70; nominates Hervey to the see of Derry, 71
- Trench, General, at Castlebar, 284, 285, 289; promises good treatment to Irish prisoners, 334; recaptures Killala, 336, 340
- Trinity College, Dublin, 12
- Troy, Archbishop, 193, 209
- True, French officer, in charge of Ballina, 332
- Turner, Bishop, 185
- Tyrawley, barony of, 268; Deal Castle wrecked, 328; Yeomanry at Killala, 335
- ULSTER, unionism in, 3-5; origin and Protestant character of Volunteers, 26, 27; annual parade round William III.'s statue, 27; efforts to secure free trade and parliamentary reform, 28; Dungannon Convention, 27, 28, 30, 31; separatist movement, 34, 35; action of the French Revolution upon the Presbyterians of, 34, 35; Northern Whig Club, 36; antipathy of the reformers to Catholics, 41, 42; theory of constitutional reform, 43; return of reformers to loyal views, 44, 45, 46; active measures to resist French invasion, 45; the Rebellion, 45, 46; origin of Orangeism, 46-48; Yeomanry movement, 54; rapid advance of Orange societies and decadence of the United Irish agitation, 54; Protestants favourable to the Union, 55; real source of the Irish Rebellion, 163; general effect of the French Revolution, 165; influence of the recognition of American independence, 166; Roman Catholic emancipation subservient in political schemes, 166; Protestants predominant partners in United Irish Alliance, 167; divergence of opinion between religious sections, 176; Scottish-Irish in the American Republic, 195
- Union, the, corrupt influences working for, 17, 18; Charlemont's



- opposition, 19; Irish Bar adverse, 20; origin in the Relief Act, 22; Lord Clare presses for, 23, 151; a section of Roman Catholic opinion favourable to, 24; Pitt's instructions to Lord Cornwallis as to the preliminaries, 24, 25: Act of, divides the Orange body, 47; Earl-Bishop of Derry advocates, 86; Plunket against, 206; Saurin against, 213
- United Irishmen of the North, motive for their action in the union of the legislatures, 5; founder, 37, 39; writers in exile, 38; secrecy and mystery affected, 44; alteration in oath, 44; Catholic emancipation espoused, 44; Presbyterian section alarmed by excesses of Catholic allies, 46; agitation against the Government, 130, 170; difference between the secret and the avowed society, 171; Knox's exposé, 176; designs, 223; appeal to the French Directory for aid, 252, 255; Longford, Cavan, Westmeath, and Roscommon, 309
- United Irish Society, at Belfast, 36, 37, 41; discredited by its strong Catholic tendency, 53; cited, 167, 168, 173
- VEREKER, Colonel, in command at Sligo, 307; attacks the French at Collooney, 307; rashness of his attempt, 308; honours conferred on him, 309
- Voltaire, on Lady Hervey, 62
- Volunteers, Ulster, nationalism that of a caste, 33; supporters of the movement, 33; strength of the Presbyterian element, 34; Belfast regiment, 45; cessation as a political force, 48; Dublin, 82 *n.*, 83, 84, 85 *n.*, 86, 87; Fox presses for their dissolution, 112; dangers from, 114, 115; Londonderry, 142; Belfast Convention, 164, 165, 173, 204, 238
- WALPOLE, Horace, on Shelburne and the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 81, 82, 87, 90
- Warren, Admiral Sir John, defeats Bompard in Lough Swilly, 321
- Wellesley, Sir Arthur (Chief Secretary), presses Plunket to remain in office, 199 *n.*; appoints Saurin on Plunket's resignation, 214; (Duke of Wellington) on Castlereagh, 179; puts Duigenan in the Irish Council, 216; his vicereignty, 220; forbids the decoration of William's statue in College Green, 221
- Wellesley, Marquess of, his mission to Ireland, 219
- Wesley, cited, 53; on the Bishop of Derry, 66, 75; influence of Knox, 161
- Westmorland, Lord, 25, 129, 135
- Wexford, rebellion in, 46, 157, 159, 266, 282
- Whig Club, the, formation of, 124; Wolfe Tone writes pamphlets for, 131
- Whiteboy Societies, 163
- White Linen Hall, Belfast, inscribed foundation stone, 1, 2; records discovered in a cavity of the stone, 3
- Wicklow, rebellion in, 159
- William III, his statue on College Green, 27
- Wilson's Hospital, rebels entrenched at, 311; Major Porter defeats them, 312
- Winter, Daniel, treaty between Peep of Day Boys and Defenders made at his house, 51
- Woodfall, on Clare's duel with Curran, 116
- Wyse, on Catholic emancipation, 209
- YELVERTON, Chief Baron, 20, 112 *n.*, 141, 142, 203
- Young, Arthur, autobiography of, 59; on Lord William Hervey, 64; intimacy with the Earl-Bishop of Derry, 81, 83; quoted, 268







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FINE ARTS (THE) AND MUSIC -	30	STONYHURST PHILOSOPHICAL SERIES -	16
HISTORY, POLITICS, POLITY, POLITICAL MEMOIRS, &c. -	3	TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE, THE COLONIES, &c. -	9
LANGUAGE, HISTORY AND SCIENCE OF -	17	WORKS OF REFERENCE -	25
LOGIC, RHETORIC, PSYCHOLOGY, &c. -	14		

## INDEX OF AUTHORS AND EDITORS.

Page	Page	Page	Page
Abbott (Evelyn) -	3, 19	Balfour (A. J.) -	11, 18
— (T. K.) -	14, 15	— (Lady Betty) -	6
— (E. A.) -	15	Ball (John) -	9
Acland (A. H. D.) -	3	Banks (M. M.) -	21
Acton (Eliza) -	29	Baring-Gould (Rev. S.) -	18, 27, 31
Adeane (J. H.) -	8	Barnett (S. A. and H.) -	17
Adelborg (O.) -	26	Baynes (T. S.) -	31
Æschylus -	19	Beaconsfield (Earl of) -	21
Ainger (A. C.) -	12	Beaufort (Duke of) -	11, 12
Albemarle (Earl of) -	11	Becker (W. A.) -	19
Allen (Grant) -	25	Beesly (A. H.) -	8
Allgood (G.) -	3	Bell (Mrs. Hugh) -	20
Angwin (M. C.) -	29	Bent (J. Theodore) -	9
Anstey (F.) -	21	Besant (Sir Walter) -	3
Aristophanes -	19	Bickerdyke (J.) -	12, 13
Aristotle -	14	Bird (G.) -	20
Arnold (Sir Edwin) -	9, 20	Blackburne (J. H.) -	13
— (Dr. T.) -	3	Bland (Mrs. Hubert) -	21
Ashbourne (Lord) -	3	Blount (Sir E.) -	7
Ashby (H.) -	29	Boase (Rev. C. W.) -	5
Ashley (W. J.) -	3, 17	Boedder (Rev. B.) -	16
Avebury (Lord) -	18	Bowen (W. E.) -	7
Ayre (Rev. J.) -	25	Brassey (Lady) -	10
		— (Lord) -	12
Bacon -	7, 14, 15	Bray (C.) -	15
Baden-Powell (B. H.) -	3	Bright (Rev. J. F.) -	3
Bagehot (W.) -	7, 17, 27, 31	Broadfoot (Major W.) -	11
Bagwell (R.) -	3	Brown (A. F.) -	26
Bailey (H. C.) -	21	— (J. Moray) -	12
Baillie (A. F.) -	3	Bruce (R. I.) -	3
Bain (Alexander) -	15	Bryce (J.) -	11
Baker (J. H.) -	31	Buck (H. A.) -	12
— (Sir S. W.) -	9	Buckland (Jas.) -	26
		Buckle (H. T.) -	3
		Bull (T.) -	29
		Burke (U. R.) -	3
		Burns (C. L.) -	30
		Burrows (Montagu) -	5
		Butler (E. A.) -	24
		Cameron of Lochiel -	13
		Campbell (Rev. Lewis) -	18, 19
		Camperdown (Earl of) -	8
		Cawthorne (Geo. Jas.) -	13
		Chesney (Sir G.) -	3
		Childe-Pemberton (W.S.) -	8
		Cholmondeley-Pennell (H.) -	11
		Christie (R. C.) -	31
		Churchill (W. Spencer) -	3, 21
		Cicero -	19
		Clarke (Rev. R. F.) -	16
		Clodd (Edward) -	18, 25
		Clutterbuck (W. J.) -	10
		Colson (R. J.) -	30
		Conington (John) -	19
		Conway (Sir W. M.) -	11
		Conybeare (Rev. W. J.) -	27
		— & Howson (Dean) -	9
		Coolidge (W. A. B.) -	9
		Corbin (M.) -	26
		Corbett (Julian S.) -	4
		Coutts (W.) -	19
		Coventry (A.) -	12
		Cox (Harding) -	11
		Crake (Rev. A. D.) -	26
		Crawford (J. H.) -	21
		— (R.) -	10
		Creed (S.) -	21
		Creighton (Bishop) -	4, 5, 8
		Crozier (J. B.) -	8, 15
		Custance (Col. H.) -	13
		Cutts (Rev. E. L.) -	5
		Dale (T. F.) -	12
		Dallinger (F. W.) -	5
		Daulish (M. G.) -	8
		Davidson (W. L.) -	15, 17, 18
		Davies (J. F.) -	19
		Dent (C. T.) -	11
		De Salis (Mrs.) -	29
		De Tocqueville (A.) -	4
		Devas (C. S.) -	16, 17
		Dickinson (G. L.) -	4
		— (W. H.) -	31
		Dougall (L.) -	21
		Dowden (E.) -	32
		Doyle (A. Conan) -	21
		Du Bois (W. E. B.) -	5
		Dufferin (Marquis of) -	12
		Dunbar (Mary F.) -	21
		Dyson (E.) -	21
		Ebrington (Viscount) -	13
		Ellis (J. H.) -	13
		— (R. L.) -	14
		Erasmus -	8, 31
		Evans (Sir John) -	31

# INDEX OF AUTHORS AND EDITORS—continued.

	Page		Page		Page		Page
Falkner (C. L.)	- 4	Hunt (Rev. W.)	- 5	Millias (J. G.)	- 14	Sheppard (E.)	- 7
Farrar (Dean)	- 17, 21	Hunter (Sir W.)	- 5	Milner (G.)	- 32	Sinclair (A.)	- 12
Fitzgibbon (M.)	- 4	Hutchinson (Horace G.)	11, 13, 31	Monck (W. H. S.)	- 16	Skirne (F. H.)	- 8
Fitzmaurice (Lord E.)	- 4			Montague (F. C.)	- 6	Smith (C. Fell)	- 9
Folkard (H. C.)	- 13	Ingelow (Jean)	- 20	Moon (G. W.)	- 20	— (R. Bosworth)	- 7
Ford (H.)	- 13	Ingram (T. D.)	- 5	Moore (T.)	- 25	— (T. C.)	- 5
— (W. J.)	- 13	Jackson (A. W.)	- 9	— (Rev. Edward)	- 14	— (W. P. Haskett)	- 10
Fountain (P.)	- 10	James (W.)	- 5	Morgan (C. Lloyd)	- 17	Somerville (E.)	- 24
Fowler (Edith H.)	- 22	Jameson (Mrs. Anna)	30	Morris (Mowbray)	- 11	Sophocles	- 19
Francis (Francis)	- 13	Jefferies (Richard)	31	— (W.)	19, 20, 23, 30, 32	Soulsby (Lucy H.)	- 32
Francis (M. E.)	- 22	Jekyll (Gertrude)	31	Mulhall (M. G.)	- 17	Southey (R.)	- 32
Freeman (Edward A.)	- 5	Jerome (Jerome K.)	22	Murray (Hilda)	- 26	Spahr (C. B.)	- 32
Fremantle (T. F.)	- 13	Johnson (J. & J. H.)	31	Myers (F. W. H.)	- 32	Spedding (J.)	- 7, 14
Freshfield (D. W.)	- 11	Jones (H. Bence)	25	Nansen (F.)	- 10	Stanley (Bishop)	- 25
Frost (G.)	- 31	Joyce (P. W.)	5, 22, 31	Nash (V.)	- 6	Stebbing (W.)	- 9
Froude (James A.)	4, 8, 10, 22	Justinian	- 15	Nesbit (E.)	- 21	Steel (A. G.)	- 11
Fuller (F. W.)	- 4	Kant (I.)	- 15	Nettleship (R. L.)	- 15	Stephen (Leslie)	- 10
Furneaux (W.)	- 24	Kaye (Sir J. W.)	- 5	Newman (Cardinal)	- 23	Stephens (H. Morse)	- 7
Gardiner (Samuel R.)	- 4	Kelly (E.)	- 15	Nichols (F. M.)	- 8, 31	Sternberg (Count Adalbert)	- 7
Gathorne-Hardy (Hon. A. E.)	- 13	Kent (C. B. R.)	- 5	Ogilvie (R.)	- 19	Stevens (R. W.)	- 31
Geikie (Rev. Cunningham)	- 31	Kerr (Rev. J.)	- 12	Oldfield (Hon. Mrs.)	- 6	Stevenson (R. L.)	21, 24, 26
Gibbons (J. S.)	- 13	Killick (Rev. A. H.)	- 15	Oliphant (N.)	- 6	Storr (F.)	- 14
Gibson (C. H.)	- 14	Kingsley (Rose G.)	30	Onslow (Earl of)	- 12	Stuart-Wortley (A. J.)	12, 13
Gleig (Rev. G. R.)	- 9	Kitchin (Dr. G. W.)	5	Osbourne (L.)	- 24	Stubbs (J. W.)	- 7
Goethe	- 20	Knight (E. F.)	10, 12	Paget (Sir J.)	- 9	Suffolk & Berkshire (Earl of)	- 11, 12
Going (C. B.)	- 26	Köstlin (J.)	- 8	Park (W.)	- 14	Sullivan (Sir E.)	- 12
Gore-Booth (Sir H. W.)	- 12	Kristeller (P.)	- 30	Parker (B.)	- 32	Sully (James)	- 16
Graham (A.)	- 13	Ladd (G. T.)	- 15	Passmore (T. H.)	- 32	Sutherland (A. and G.)	- 7
— (P. A.)	- 13	Lang (Andrew)	5, 11, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 23, 26, 32	Payne-Gallwey (Sir R.)	- 12, 14	— (Alex.)	- 16, 32
— (G. F.)	- 17	Lapsley (G. T.)	- 5	Pearson (C. H.)	- 9	— (G.)	- 32
Granby (Marquess of)	- 13	Lascelles (Hon. G.)	11, 13	Peek (Hedley)	- 12	Suttner (B. von)	- 24
Grant (Sir A.)	- 14	Laurie (S. S.)	- 5	Pemberton (W. S. Childie)	- 8	Swan (M.)	- 24
Graves (R. P.)	- 15	Lawley (Hon. F.)	- 12	Pembroke (Earl of)	- 12	Swinburne (A. J.)	- 16
Green (T. Hill)	- 15	Lawrence (F. W.)	- 17	Pennant (C. D.)	- 13	Symes (J. E.)	- 17
Greene (E. B.)	- 5	Lear (H. L. Sidney)	29, 31	Penrose (Mrs.)	- 26	Tallentyre (S. G.)	- 9
Greville (C. C. F.)	- 4	Lecky (W. E. H.)	5, 16, 20	Phillips-Wolley (C.)	11, 23	Tappan (E. M.)	- 26
Grosce (T. H.)	- 15	Lees (J. A.)	- 10	Pitman (C. M.)	- 12	Taylor (Col. Meadows)	- 7
Gross (C.)	- 4, 5	Leslie (T. E. Cliffe)	- 17	Pleydell-Bouverie (E. O.)	- 12	Tebbutt (C. G.)	- 12
Grove (F. C.)	- 11	Levett-Yeats (S.)	- 22	Pole (W.)	- 14	Terry (C. S.)	- 8
— (Mrs. Lilly)	- 11	Lillie (A.)	- 22	Pollock (W. H.)	- 11, 32	Thomas (J. W.)	- 16
Gurdon (Lady Camilla)	- 22	Lindley (J.)	- 25	Poole (W. H. and Mrs.)	29	Thornhill (W. J.)	- 19
Gurnhill (J.)	- 15	Loch (C. S.)	- 31	Poore (G. V.)	- 32	Thornton (T. H.)	- 9
Gwilt (J.)	- 25	Locock (C. D.)	- 14	Pope (W. H.)	- 13	Todd (A.)	- 7
Haggard (H. Rider)	10, 22, 31	Lodge (H. C.)	- 5	Powell (E.)	- 7	Toynbee (A.)	- 17
Hake (O.)	- 12	Loflie (Rev. W. J.)	- 5	Præger (S. Rosamond)	26	Trevelyan (Sir G. O.)	6, 7, 8
Halliwell-Phillips (J.)	- 9	Longman (C. J.)	11, 13	Prevost (C.)	- 11	— (G. M.)	- 7
Hamilton (Col. H. B.)	- 5	— (F. W.)	- 14	Pritchett (R. T.)	- 12	Trollope (Anthony)	- 24
Hamlin (A. D. F.)	- 30	— (G. H.)	11, 13	Proctor (R. A.)	14, 25, 28, 29	Turner (H. G.)	- 32
Harding (S. B.)	- 5	— (Mrs. C. J.)	- 30	Raine (Rev. James)	- 5	Tyndall (J.)	- 8, 10
Harmsworth (A. C.)	- 12	Lowell (A. L.)	- 5	Randolph (C. F.)	- 7	Tyrrill (R. Y.)	- 19
Harte (Bret)	- 22	Lubbock (Sir John)	- 18	Rankin (R.)	- 7, 21	Unwin (R.)	- 32
Harting (J. E.)	- 13	Lucan	- 19	Ransome (Cvriil)	3, 7	Upton (F. K. and Bertha)	- 27
Hartwig (G.)	- 25	Lutoslawski (W.)	- 16	Raymond (W.)	- 23	Van Dyke (J. C.)	- 30
Hassall (A.)	- 7	Lyall (Edna)	- 23	Reid (S. J.)	- 7	Virgil	- 19
Haweis (H. R.)	8, 30	Lynch (G.)	- 6	Rhodes (J.)	- 19	Wagner (R.)	- 21
Head (Mrs.)	- 30	— (H. F. B.)	- 10	Rice (S. P.)	- 10	Wakeman (H. O.)	- 7
Heath (D. D.)	- 14	Lytelton (Hon. R. H.)	11	Rich (A.)	- 19	Walford (L. B.)	- 24
Heathcote (J. M.)	- 12	— (Hon. A.)	- 12	Richardson (C.)	11, 13	Wallas (Graham)	- 9
— (C. G.)	- 12	Lytton (Earl of)	6, 20	Richmond (Ennis)	- 16	— (Mrs. Graham)	- 26
— (N.)	- 10	Macaulay (Lord)	- 6, 20	Rickaby (Rev. John)	- 16	Walpole (Sir Spencer)	- 7
Helmholtz (Hermann von)	- 25	Maddon (Dr. G.)	- 20	— (Rev. Joseph)	- 16	Walrod (Col. H.)	- 11
Henderson (Lieut. Col. G. F. R.)	- 8	Macfarren (Sir G. A.)	30	Ridley (Sir E.)	- 19	Walsingham (Lord)	- 12
Henry (W.)	- 12	MacKail (J. W.)	9, 19	— (Lady Alice)	- 23	Ward (Mrs. W.)	- 24
Henty (G. A.)	- 26	Mackenzie (C. G.)	- 19	Riley (J. W.)	- 21	Warwick (Countess of)	32
Herbert (Col. Kenney)	13	Mackinnon (J.)	- 6	Roget (Peter M.)	17, 25	Watson (A. E. T.)	11, 12
Herod (Richard S.)	- 13	Macleod (H. D.)	- 17	Romanes (G. J.)	9, 16, 18, 21	Weathers (J.)	- 32
Hiley (R. W.)	- 8	Macpherson (Rev. H. A.)	- 12, 13	— (Mrs. G. J.)	- 9	Webb (Mr. and Mrs. Sidney)	- 17
Hill (Mabel)	- 5	Madden (D. H.)	- 14	Ronalds (A.)	- 14	— (T. E.)	- 16, 20
Hillier (G. Lucy)	- 11	Magnusson (E.)	- 22	Roosevelt (T.)	- 5	Weber (A.)	- 16
Hime (H. W. L.)	- 19	Maher (Rev. M.)	- 16	Ross (Martin)	- 24	Weir (Capt. R.)	- 12
Hodgson (Shadworth)	15, 31	Malleson (Col. G. B.)	- 5	Rossetti (Maria Francesca)	- 32	Wellington (Duchess of)	30
Hoegien (F.)	- 31	Marchmont (A. W.)	23	Rotheram (M. A.)	- 29	West (B. B.)	- 24
Hogan (J.)	- 8	Marshman (J. C.)	- 8	Rowe (R. P. P.)	- 12	Weyman (Stanley)	- 24
Holmes (R. R.)	- 9	Maryon (M.)	- 32	Russell (Lady)	- 9	Whately (Archbishop)	14, 16
Holroyd (M. J.)	- 8	Mason (A. E. W.)	- 23	Saintsbury (G.)	- 12	Whitlaw (R.)	- 19
Homer	- 19	Maskelyne (J. N.)	- 14	Sanders (T. C.)	- 15	Whitall (Sir J. W.)	- 32
Hope (Anthony)	- 22	Matthews (B.)	- 32	Sanders (E. K.)	- 8	Wilkins (G.)	- 19
Horace	- 19	Mauder (S.)	- 25	Savage-Armstrong (G. F.)	21	— (W. H.)	- 3
Houston (D. P.)	- 5	Max Müller (F.)	9, 16, 17, 18, 23, 32	Seeborn (F.)	- 7, 9	Willard (A. R.)	- 30
Howard (Lady Mabel)	- 22	May (Sir T. Erskine)	- 26	Selous (F. C.)	- 11, 14	Willich (C. M.)	- 25
Howitt (W.)	- 10	Meade (L. T.)	- 26	Senior (W.)	- 12, 13	Witham (T. M.)	- 12
Hudson (W. H.)	- 25	Melville (G. J. Whyte)	23	Sewell (Elizabeth M.)	23	Wood (Rev. J. G.)	- 25
Huish (M. B.)	- 30	Merrivale (Dean)	- 6	Shakespeare	- 21	Wood-Martin (W. G.)	- 7
Hullah (J.)	- 30	Merriman (H. S.)	- 23	Shand (A. I.)	- 13	Wyatt (A. J.)	- 20
Hume (David)	- 15	Mill (John Stuart)	- 16, 17	Shaw (W. A.)	- 7, 31	Wylie (J. H.)	- 7
— (M. A. S.)	- 3			Shearman (M.)	- 11	Zeller (E.)	- 16

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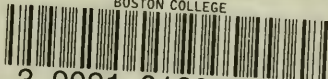
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